

Dear Committee Members:

I'm writing to strongly encourage you to support HB2004, lifting the pre-emption on rent control and ending the practice of no-cause eviction.

I would like to emphasize that both are important regulatory reforms to help tenants in this protracted housing emergency, and *we need both simultaneously*. Rent stabilization is a useful—perhaps the only—regulatory tool to allow tenants security of tenure in their housing (assuming a just-cause ordinance on the books to avoid evictions solely for rent hikes). This is not speculation, but rather the evidence from cities, counties, provinces around the globe that have some form of rent control and still have multigenerational, culturally rich communities as a result.

Oregon and especially its metropolitan centers up and down the Willamette Valley are growing dramatically, as a combination of copacetic weather, progressive politics (or the impression of such), and other intangibles. Speculative investment in the housing market and dramatic wealth inequality are pushing an enormous housing bubble, with properties being bought at price points far above their intrinsic worth, encouraging similarly inflated rents. Here's the fundamental issue: **housing is being used primarily as a commodity and as a vehicle for wealth accumulation**. Unfortunately, this is a game that many cannot realistically hope to participate in, let alone succeed in.

The landlords evicting entire buildings *because they can* or doubling rents overnight *because they can* are simply making making sound financial choices within the logic of this system. They aren't evil (usually), just playing the game well from their position of relative privilege. The roots of that privilege are, of course, anything but just, especially when it comes to race. Much inherited wealth in Oregon is in the form of property—property that people of color were forbidden to buy because of redlining and other racist laws that existed until well into the 1990s. The value of diversity to the social fabric (maintaining working class communities, maintaining communities of color, maintaining non-English speaking communities) cannot be overstated. These populations are the most vulnerable to being priced out and pushed out as waves of gentrification wash over cities with nice sounding phrases like "urban renewal" (a renewal that will only benefit the colonizing, overwhelmingly White, wealthier class of residents).

**When we decide to account for the myriad social benefits of communities with access to stable, affordable, safe, quality homes** (internalizing what economists regularly refer to as "externalities"), then it makes sense to have rent control, just-cause eviction, and other regulatory tools to prioritize housing as a civil right, a social good, and even a utility. We must invest in our communities, not only with money, but with housing stability.

This is not the opinion of a narrow special interest group, but rather those who pay rent who make up almost half of residents in the state, as well as many homeowners and landlords who recognize the urgent need for protections for tenants.

I trust that you will support this bill to bring it out to the House floor for a heartier debate about the nuances of rent control policies and due process in eviction law. Renters are watching.

Thank you for your time,  
Sammy Black  
Organizer, Portland Tenants United