

Dear Oregon Legislators,

I'm writing to you in support of House Bill 2004. The passage of this legislation will provide much-needed security for many tenants in precarious living situations.

As you know, the percentage of Americans living paycheck to paycheck is increasing, and Oregon is no exception. For us tenants to be at the mercy of landlords, as state law currently requires us to be, is antithetical to a free and just society. While not all, and perhaps not even most landlords abuse their power, the effects of the bad actors are far-ranging and devastating to the poor and to minority communities all across our state. In 2017 alone, entire neighborhoods in North and Northeast Portland have faced mass no-cause evictions and rent hikes of 100%.

Why? Because the cold, amoral economic calculus of the opportunistic landlord or developer says that they should evict the poor so that they can replace affordable housing with more upscale accommodations, aimed at tenants who are wealthier and more upwardly mobile, who can afford to pay much higher rents. If we are committed to the defense of the rights and welfare of all Oregonians, then these exploitative actions are completely unacceptable and must be curtailed. You have the power to do this, by enacting legislation that will permit Oregon cities to set reasonable limits on rent increases, and on evictions.

No doubt you've already heard from many landlords telling you that HB 2004 is bad for business. This is a highly disingenuous argument, crafted to shield their bad behavior, or to shield any bad behavior they plan in the future, from any sanction. What they truly mean is that this law will be bad for profits. And I am sure that they are correct--after its passage it will no longer be possible for them to extract an unethical surplus of wealth through the displacement of poor families. They may instead have to settle for a more reasonable profit margin, one more free of cruelty and greed. HB 2004 may be bad for profits in this way. But it will be good for people.

I myself am a renter and a registered voter in the state of Oregon. We are many, we are watching, and we are organized. Please do right by us by seeing this through and passing HB 2004, without significant amendments and with as much expediency as possible.

Sincerely,
Kyle Costaggini