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Testimony on HB 2004 March 2, 2017

AARP is pleased to endorse HB 2004, a bill that seeks to protect renters from no-cause evictions and extreme rent increases.

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social welfare organization with a nationwide membership of nearly 38 million and 500,000 in Oregon. We work to improve quality of life for all as we age, strengthen our communities, and fight for the issues that matter to Oregon families. An important aspect of our work in Oregon is advocating for livable and age-friendly communities, including expanding housing options and ensuring access to affordable, safe, secure, and accessible homes for Oregonians of all ages and abilities.

AARP research tells us that 90% of people 65 and older want to remain in their homes and communities as they get older. However, the reality of safe and affordable homes for many families in our communities is in jeopardy due to the unprecedented housing crisis in our state. It certainly is so for many older Oregonians from metro areas to rural communities.

In 2015, more than 22 percent of all 65+ households—nationally 6.4 million households—rented their homes. As the older adult population is projected to grow, it is estimated that the number of older adult renter households will more than double between now and 2035. In Oregon today, over 40% of renters 50yrs and older are cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income on housing. More alarmingly, almost 39% of renters over 65yrs and 55% of those over 85yrs pay more than 50% of their income on housing. AARP believes that HB 2004 is a good step towards addressing the current housing crisis particularly as it relates to the need for tenant protections and rent stabilization.

Many Oregon renters today live in fear of being evicted without a valid reason and with as little as 30 days' notice. Just recently an AARP member from Lane County shared with us her story. Upon informing her landlord of two cases of theft of personal items from the balcony of her apartment, the landlord, instead of taking steps to ensure her sense of safety, threatened her with an eviction notice if she "complained" again.

In this current rental market, fear of retaliatory evictions and resulting displacement can keep even the those in the best of circumstances from raising totally justified concerns about their living quarters. For people with disabilities and older renters living on fixed incomes for whom finding an affordable and accessible home on short notice can be near impossible in this market, our current laws render them especially vulnerable. People who may need accommodations for accessibility, or whose renters living

Real Possibilities

in places that need safety repairs, may refrain from requesting justified maintenance because of fear of retaliation and a notice of no-cause eviction.

For older adults, loss of a home can mean loss of community ties, displacement, even premature, unnecessary and costly institutionalization on tax-payer dollars. If we indeed believe in the premise of age friendly planning, we need to seriously consider the impact of forcing individuals from their homes and communities, at a time in their lives when they need those natural supports the most. People shouldn't have to worry about suddenly losing their homes. We need to protect renters from being evicted without a valid reason and this is exactly what HB 2004 will do.

Rent increases can mean cutting down on other necessities like food and medicine. The average social security benefit in Oregon is \$1250/month and it is the sole source of income for 3 out of 10 older Oregonians. This makes finding and keeping an affordable home a tremendous challenge.

The needs of different communities in Oregon are varied and cannot be managed effectively without access to all the tools available to meet those needs. We need to allow Oregon cities and counties to consider and enact rent-stabilization policies to meet the needs of their communities. Current Oregon state law prohibits local jurisdictions to pass any rent stabilization ordinances that would control the rate and speed of rent increases. Local governments need all the tools available to address the housing crisis and HB 2004 aims to do exactly that.

On behalf of the over half million AARP members ages 50+ statewide, we urge you to support HB 2004.

Thank you for your leadership and commitment to make our region an age-friendly and livable place for people of all ages and abilities.



Elaine Friesen-Strang
Volunteer State President
AARP Oregon

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- <https://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/liv-com/ib190.pdf>
 - <http://cdn.bipartisanpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/BPC-Healthy-Aging.pdf>
 - http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/sites/jchs.harvard.edu/files/jchs-housing_americas_older_adults_2014.pdf