

**To the Honorable Representative Alissa Key-Guyer and members of the Committee on Human Services and Housing:**

I am Marih Alyn-Claire, community advocate for renters rights, seniors and people with disabilities. I am a native resident of Portland, Oregon living in SE Portland. I come before you seeking your assistance and support of HB2001: Rent Stabilization repealing the statewide prohibition on city and county ordinances regulating rents.

Renters across all income classes are being displaced throughout our state. Plagued by rapidly accelerating rent prices and *No-Cause Evictions* we are experiencing on-going distress and housing insecurity. Some of us are now homeless.

**“It’s not about *people* anymore”**

We live in a new housing market place driven and controlled by speculators and corporate investors primarily seeking rapid financial gain at the expense of renters, their families and our communities.

We can no longer pay 40, 50 60,70 percent or more of our income for rent. Many vulnerable middle and low income renters have hit a *price-wall*. We are feeling the threat of completely losing control of our ability to afford a rental home. Struggling to barely hang on, we are running out of options.

**3 examples of self protective coping strategies we have employed:**

**Distance Moving**

A low income African American woman and community activist whose rent was raised \$250 per month said “I’m not going to even bother looking for another apartment in Portland, because once I move in, they soon jack up the rent and I will have to move again”. **She moved 97 miles away from Portland in order to find housing she could afford. She is aware that she is merely buying time before this community is also flooded by displaced tenants and the rent-hike market cycle will accelerate all over again.**

**Local Rent-Hopping**

A 73 yr old woman disabled by brain injury, living on social security and a modest pension has experienced displacement 5 times in the past 6 years, moving from one end of town to another in an attempt to *out-pace* the out of control rents. She was sometimes offered teaser move-in rental prices by corporate landlords. Then upon her lease renewal, she faced yet another high rent increase ranging from 300-500 per month. What she saved by rent-hopping was lost by high moving expenses and application fees. She is now paying two thirds of her income in rent before her household and mounting medical expenses (following her recent 5 surgeries). I asked her, “What will you do if your landlord raises your rent another \$300 dollars”. She gave a blank stare and stated, “I don’t know”.

### **Accepting Inappropriate Environments**

In my case, I was priced out last year with only 2 months left before becoming homeless. After searching for 9 months, for a affordable replacement housing, only one option became available. A senior building on a busy/noisy SE Portland Boulevard with a tavern across the street (next to a pot dispensary), a Trimet bus stop on the corner, and a upper unit overlooking a large tenant parking lot.

**For the past year, I've experienced on-going disruptions in my sleep-wake cycles to affecting both the quality and duration of my sleep. I wake up after 3.5 hours due to all of the coming and going of daily delivery trucks, transport lifts ,fire, medical emergency vehicles on a regular basis both day and night.**

Displaced from my previous apartment with my own entrance to now having hallways with barking dogs and heavy foot traffic and a bar across the street with intoxicated patrons yelling and screaming at 3am etc. has taken a heavy toll on my health.

I was aware that the environment would likely conflict with my health needs (as a senior disabled by brain injury), but I was out of time and options, so I moved in.

In October, sleep deprived and very rummy, I stumbled, experiencing a hard fall on the thin, carpeting covering a concrete slab, crashing into furniture and closet doors severely injuring myself, requiring months to recover.

**I have a affordable place to live** for which I am grateful, but the environment is contributing to the steady deterioration of my health.

Renters like myself are making all kinds of concessions trying to survive in this inhumane rental market. However, whether it is rent-hopping, distance moving or trading our health for housing, like the *abusive* rent-hikes, **these are all short-term measures that are unsustainable.**

**Mayor Wheeler, Chloe Eudaly and the Portland City Council members are trying to mitigate the displacement costs for tenants with the temporary *Moving Assistance Ordinance*.** What I anticipate will happen is that certain landlords will double down on rent prices for *new* tenants and then, when the ordinance is lifted, go back to business as usual. Displaced tenants will be facing even higher unmanageable rents in the future.

**We need long term fair and balanced housing solutions that make sense for renters, property owners and our communities.**

**I'm requesting your help in passing HB 2001: Rent Stabilization Ordinance.**

I appreciate your support and thank you for taking my testimony.