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To: House Committee on Human Services and Housing

From: Nickolas Hash

RE: HB 2004

Hello Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice-Chairs Olson and Sanchez, members of the committee,

First of all, I would like to thank you for spending the time to receive my testimony on this pressing matter and express my gratitude for your support on issues of community equity & justice. As a university student that has experienced homelessness more than once in my life, at one point in 2011 resulting in a failed term that I still carry on my transcript followed by a forced break from education for over a year while I scraped together some type of housing security, I can personally attest to what an imperative it is that we implement stronger protections for our communities of vulnerable renters.

With cost of living in Portland showing little sign of descent any time soon and the housing market rapidly becoming out of reach for anyone earning less than six figures per year, by continuing the ban on rent controls and letting landlords increase rents to astronomical rates, we are actively manufacturing predatory capitalist values in our communities. This sends the message to Oregon residents that they only matter if they can afford to buy property, and that message is unacceptable. I urge you to vote in favor of HB 2004 to start moving our state in a direction that tells people that they are valued members of society and deserve a roof over their head for a price that they can afford, and not one of the status quo. Not a message that the small, elite few matter more than the very large working classes. Not a message that people can be priced out and kicked out on the street at any moment. Help us help Oregonians feel like they matter, like they are dignified and like they deserve to have their most basic needs met. Social capital and state progress cannot be created when residents can't rely on a safe, equitable home. Graduation or even just maintaining employment becomes next to impossible when you don't have a place to sleep.

Student debt and rising tuition only go to compound these issues, in turn creating a negative feedback loop that cannot be stopped by consumers alone. Leaving your most needy populations to fight it out with the business class is no longer an acceptable option for our leaders to consider. This is why I ask you today to not only use your voting power vote yes on House Bill 2004, but I'm asking you to use your humanity and leadership to demand that your fellow voting authorities do the same. The people of Oregon need you now.