

To the Committee:

Since 1997, I have lived in a manufactured home park and since 1998, been involved with issues that affect livability in these parks where people own their homes but rent the land under them. While I think the Landlord/Tenant Statutes of Chapter 90 are fair, I have seen that when these laws are ignored and/or superseded by dubious demands or intimidation by landlords, the only recourse renters have is to sue in court. Many of these people don't have money for up-front court costs and are uncertain if they will win or lose a court case. In other words they can't afford to hire an attorney and most, to be frank, don't have the guts to sue.

What we need now, more than anything, is enforcement of the Chapter 90 statutes. If mediation can't solve a problem, then an arbitrator should judge the outcome. Mediation should come first for any dispute, ideally including disputes over rents. If the parties can't come to terms, then the arbitrator should decide.

Currently, one side can refuse mediation. Mediation should NOT be by choice. People on two sides of an issue should be required to sit down and talk things over. If they can't reach an understanding, then a knowledgeable arbitrator should make the final decision.

Example: We understand that we aren't allowed to object to rent increases or to ask for mediation over them at this time, and we realize that rents have escalated everywhere to the point that people are having to live with relatives, in their cars, or on the streets or join long waiting lists for subsidized housing. Our manufactured space rent went up \$24 last year and is going up \$29 this year. We are on a fixed income that has decreased slightly this year, so \$53 is a big jump for us. The rent increase was based on the "market value of the land," our notice said. When my husband wrote to ask what the market value of our land is, he got no reply. When he wrote again and asked, he got no reply. The rent increases of our neighbors varied from \$5 to \$11 during these two-year periods. I think a mediator would be a good person to sit down with us and the property manager and help us discuss the value of the space under our house(s). If HB2004 or HB 2008 or any other of the bills currently being considered can put some teeth into Chapter 90 statutes, I'm for sending them on to the floor of the House for consideration.

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