

May 2, 2017

Senate Committee on Human Services

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen and Members of the Committee:

Elders in Action believes that HB2004 provides much needed protections for overburdened tenants. Daily, Elders in Action receives calls from older adults who have been evicted for no cause or whose rents have risen so precipitously that they can no longer afford to remain in apartments they have lived in for up to 30 years. Relocating at age 80 is simply not as easy and can have profound and detrimental health impacts on the affected individual.

HB2004 is considerate of landlord's needs and interests. It contains a five year hold on the effective date for new buildings, a fair market increase clause with an appeal, and multiple exemptions that allow landlords to evict residents when family members move in, demolition or rehabilitation is required or when units are to be used for business rather than housing. The House Committee on Human Services and Housing listened to the development and management community and made reasonable changes to the bill to lessen perceived negative impacts.

The individuals we hear from every day are living on incomes of less than \$1500/month. In some cases, social security pays them less than \$1000/month. When receiving no cause evictions, older adults are faced with the impossible tasks of finding another place to live in a short period of time within their budget; somehow finding money to pay first and last month's rent and a security deposit if they are fortunate enough to find suitable accommodation; and then somehow pack up 30 years of possessions and relocate it to a new residence. In many cases they must do this without social or family support. This scenario is representative of many of the calls Elders in Action receives requesting help.

I am sure you know what the rental prices are right now in Washington, Clackamas and Multnomah Counties. I challenge everyone in this room to try to find an apartment within the next 90 days for under \$1,000 that is close to services and accessible to transit and assume that you will be able to afford food and medical expenses as well. When older adults are displaced the results are a cascading series of impacts –from health related effects of stress and anxiety, increased transportation needs to return the long distance from the social networks and services, to homelessness. Many homeless over the age of 50 are experiencing homelessness for the first time.

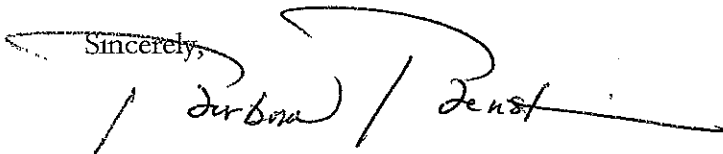
In Portland, we approved a measure that places a burden on our property taxes to pay for affordable housing. The City of Portland and Multnomah County have allocated millions of dollars to increasing affordable housing stock. Multnomah County is even offering financial assistance to people who offer ADUs to the homeless. Non profits, like NW Pilot Project, Community Alliance of Tenants, IRCO and El Programa are working tirelessly to help people who have been evicted or priced out of their homes find new affordable rentals.

It is an exciting time of growth and opportunity. HB2004 has been responsive to the requests of landlords and developers and their desire to maximize this moment. But, it is time to balance their needs with the needs of the community as a whole.

Rents are rising in many cases because they CAN not because they need to. Rents are simple rising far too much and far too quickly to sustain our renting population. Our communities are for everyone. Will Oregon continue to be an attractive place to come to visit or live if we are seen to value profit over the lives of our most vulnerable? It is time for all Oregonians to come together to create a place where we can all age with dignity. Landlords and developers have a great opportunity to be a part of the solution.

On behalf of Elders in Action, and those of us who serve vulnerable older adults, I urge you to pass this bill as written.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Bernstein', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

Barbara Bernstein
Executive Director