



May 3, 2017

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

On behalf of the Urban League of Portland, I respectfully request your support for HB 2004A to end no-cause evictions and repeal the ban on rent stabilization. Established in 1945, the Urban League of Portland is one of the oldest African American service, civil rights and advocacy organizations in the area. Recognized as one of the leading voices for African Americans and other people of color in the region, our mission is to empower African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. Our programs include a distinctive blend of direct services, organizing, outreach, and advocacy. Housing issues and policy is a passion of ours, and we provide various housing services, including placement, rent assistance, and housing advocacy.

While many landlords are doing right by their tenants, those who aren't use no-cause evictions to avoid the simple legal process for removing tenants. Instead of identifying a valid reason to remove a family from their home, bad actor landlords are terminating leases to raise rents, or even worse, discriminate against certain tenants. No-cause evictions are also used to retaliate against tenants who ask for necessary and reasonable repairs, making renters afraid to request basic repairs needed to keep their homes safe and habitable. Extreme rent increases cause immense financial hardship on working families that can force them to deplete their savings, putting them in danger of becoming homeless and send them into a spiral of poverty. Moreover, these practices disproportionately impact people of color, worsening inequities and pulling communities apart, especially through gentrification and displacement.

Across Oregon, people are experiencing extreme rent increases that are forcing them out of their homes and communities. In particular, the African-American and Black communities of Oregon have been systematically displaced by many unfair housing practices, including drastic rent increases and no-cause evictions. Finding a new affordable apartment near their current home is a serious challenge in our state's highly competitive rental markets. Large rent increases mean families spend more of their income on housing, and less on other basic necessities like food, medicine, and utilities. Four in ten Oregonians rent their home and more than 60% of Black families are renters, being potentially vulnerable to unpredictable housing changes.

I have included a story from Charlene Campbell that was featured in our State of Black Oregon 2015 report, which highlights how no-cause evictions, rent increases, and gentrification culminate into the erasure of history and the displacement of families. HB 2004A will protect housing stability by creating a just cause eviction standard, which would require a legitimate reason for termination, such as a lease violation or a landlord's business or family necessity; and by repealing the state prohibition on local jurisdictions' ability to consider rent stabilization policies, such as ordinances that would slow the rate and speed of rent increases for tenants while still allowing landlords a reasonable rate of return.

Renters who pay rent on time and comply with the rules are still at risk of displacement. We hope that you will join us in support of HB 2004A to help all Oregonians not only survive but *thrive*.

Thank you,

Amira Streeter
Policy and Advocacy Director



CASE STUDY 17

GENTRIFICATION AND HOUSING INSECURITY ERASE THE PAST AND CREATE AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Charlene Campbell has lived most of her life in N/NE Portland. Now, like many of her former Black neighbors, she lives east of 82nd Avenue. Charlene says, “There are more Blacks living out here than before. Go farther out—Burnside and 162nd, and even out on 181st—you see a lot of Black faces. All those people you mean when you say, ‘I wonder what happened to them.’ They’re out here.”

For the last seven years, Charlene, 62, has lived with her 39-year-old daughter and her three granddaughters, ages 21, 13 and 8. Earlier, she moved from place to place, progressively farther from N Portland, where she grew up.

Before moving in with her daughter, Charlene’s last stable living situation was a house in NE Portland. She received a “no cause” eviction; the landlords didn’t have to explain why they were kicking her out. The constant uncertainty was a struggle. She says, “It affects a lot because you don’t know whether you’re going to be in a place or on the streets.”

Charlene helps her daughter pay rent and bills. Even though Southeast is more affordable than Northeast, it’s still a daily struggle to make all the payments. With the inflation in rental

prices, going back to her old neighborhood is unthinkable.

Charlene grew up in Columbia Villa when Blacks primarily lived in North Portland. Places like Mississippi Avenue and Alberta Street are starkly different from when she was young. She rarely saw Whites in these areas, which were predominantly Black, full of businesses that served the Black community. Now they’re mostly White, with little indication of the past.

Even Columbia Villa is a far cry from what she remembers. It was rebuilt and renamed New Columbia in 2005. Charlene says the most noticeable difference is the influx of housing developments. “When I lived there, it was better because you had your own yard. You could do your own thing. You had neighbors, but it wasn’t like your door here, their door there.”

While her new home in many ways reminds her of where she grew up, there are also major differences. Southeast is rural. The streets are long, with few sidewalks, and you can walk long stretches without seeing a crosswalk. She has few friends who live in the area and relies on the phone to stay in touch. For the most part, Charlene keeps to herself.