



To: Senate Committee on Human Services
From: Alicia Temple, Deputy Director, Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Date: February 28, 2017
Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2004A

Central City
Concern/
Old Town Clinic

Children's
Community Clinic

Health Centers of
University of
Western States

Mercy & Wisdom
Community Health
Clinic

NARA Indian
Health Clinic

National University
of Natural Medicine
Community Clinics

Neighborhood
Health Center

North by Northeast
Community Health
Center

OHSU Family
Medicine at
Richmond

Oregon College of
Oriental Medicine

Outside In

PACS Family
Health Clinic

Rosewood Family
Health Center

SW Community
Health Center

The Wallace
Medical Concern

Chair Gelsler, Vice Chair Olsen, and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services:

On behalf of the Coalition of Community Health Clinics (CCHC), I respectfully request your support for HB2004A. It is critical that the legislature take action to protect renters from no cause evictions and extreme rent increases.

The Coalition of Community Health Clinics is made up of 15 clinics in 40 locations across the tri-county area. Our mission is to improve healthcare for vulnerable populations. We achieve this mission by strengthening community health clinics, promoting health equity, and fostering collaboration across the safety-net delivery system. Our clinics provide high quality, culturally appropriate healthcare to low-income children and adults who are uninsured, on OHP or under-insured. Community health centers serve populations struggling with poverty, language barriers, abuse, addictions, homelessness, and mental health issues. This past fiscal year member clinics saw over 54,000 patients and had over 280,000 visits. Of those patients, 93% had incomes below 200% of the federal poverty level, 51% of patients are covered by OHP, and another 24% are uninsured.

Coalition clinics know that when a patient comes through their doors their health is not the only thing on their mind. Too many patients are worried about where they are going to sleep that night or how they are going to pay the rent if they see an exorbitant rent increase.

The reality is that an individual's health and housing are dependent on each other. Stable housing is a key element in improving the health of our communities. Managing complex health conditions can be challenging for low-income individuals struggling to make ends meet but it can feel impossible for those who find themselves without a home due to no-cause evictions or rent increases. Being housed makes treatment more likely to be successful.

No cause evictions and the inaccessibility of affordable housing options means more people end up homeless. Clinics see everyday how living on the streets or in crowded shelters can exacerbate existing conditions and can also result in new health problems stemming from chronic stress, injury, exposure to elements, and living in unsanitary conditions. Not only does this have severe consequences for people's health, but it is costly. Research shows that stable, affordable housing lowers the cost to the healthcare system¹. Patients who are able to stay housed are more likely to go to continue seeing primary care providers as opposed to depending on Emergency Departments for care.

Housing instability can also have an impact on a person's continuity of insurance coverage. As you know, the OHP application process is difficult to navigate and information about coverage—including renewal notices—are sent by mail. If a patient has changing

¹ Center for Outcomes Research and Education (CORE) and Enterprise Community Partners. (2016). Health in Housing: Exploring the Intersection Between Housing and Health Care.



addresses or periods of homelessness it makes it that much harder to renew their coverage and continue to access care.

As HB 2004 moved through the House, legislators worked to address the concerns of both renters and landlords. Legislators proposed amendments that sought to help alleviate these concerns. The amendments adopted in HB 2004A include several important concessions:

- Landlords would be able to remove a tenant without cause during the first six months of tenancy.
- Small landlords who own four or fewer units are not required to pay relocation assistance.
- Any rent stabilization ordinances passed by local governments would need to ensure a fair return for landlords and include an appeal process to accommodate needed repairs.
- Any rent stabilization policy would also include an exemption for new construction of up to 5 years, helping ensure development of new needed housing continues. These amendments create policies that protect Oregon renters while preserving landlords' property rights.

These straightforward amendments balance the concerns from all parties and still maintain legislation that will protect renters—and their health. Stable housing is critical to an individual's health and it is clear that the current housing crisis is a threat to the health of our communities. We hope that you will join us in support of HB 2004A.

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