



## Deborah Kafoury Multnomah County Chair

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Dear Chair Gelser and the members of the Senate Human Services Committee;

I am writing in support of House Bill 2004, which will help local communities respond to an unprecedented housing crisis that is threatening thousands of families across Oregon with homelessness.

Earlier this year I testified in favor of this bill and told the story of the Normandy Apartments.

In January the 18-unit complex changed hands and the new owners sent out rent increase notifications to tenants. Rents were rising in some cases from \$600 to \$1,250. Twenty-six of the children living in the Normandy are students of nearby Rigler Elementary -- five percent of the entire student body.

We identified \$48,000 at Multnomah County to stabilize these families by offering temporary rent assistance to keep them in their housing through the end of the school year. But in the end, the landlord rescinded the rent increases and instead will be terminating the leases of the residents this summer.

These children will remain at their school this year. But there's no guarantee next year.

These kinds of stories are heartbreaking. And they're far too common across Oregon. Families are being forced to make difficult decisions between paying the rent and paying for dinner or medicine.

And when rents are rising like they are today, that balancing act gets harder and harder every day.

We don't have the resources to close the gap for all of these families. Which is why sensible ordinances that give tenants predictability and the ability to budget for their household expenses are truly needed.

Multnomah County operates a year-round shelter for homeless families that serves every family that seeks help. No one is turned away. Over the past two years, we have seen a dramatic surge of need. Families from all over the region are losing housing, they're sleeping in their cars, with relatives or, when all else fails, our shelter.

And their children are struggling to maintain a connection to their schools and the community of support -- churches, community centers, and family members -- they need to succeed.

A healthy housing market benefits all of us. But when our market is constrained by high prices, low vacancies and speculative investment, it becomes a burden on hard-working Oregonians.

Today, we have a choice: continue to do what we've been doing -- and hope that unseen market forces intervene before another mass eviction or 100-percent rent increase. Or we can do something about it.

House Bill 2004 is our chance to take on a generational crisis that is threatening our quality of life, and tearing apart communities that we all know and love. We can give tenants the peace of mind of knowing that they won't be denied their home without cause and without reason, and give local communities the opportunity to decide how best to address the crisis that unchecked rent increases are causing for families.

Sincerely,



Deborah Kafoury  
Multnomah County Chair