

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

I currently live in the Montavilla neighborhood in Portland, and I have been a teacher/educator for over a decade. I've taught English/Language Arts and Outdoor Education at Madison High School, Open Meadow Middle School, Outside In, and Catlin Gabel, as well as Urban Studies courses at Portland State University. At ALL of these schools, I have had students who are homeless. With alarming frequency, they become homeless following a no-cause eviction or large rent raise that their families just can't afford.

One young woman, a budding poet who loves to cook - "Kira", stands out in my mind. Her family was renting an apartment in the Rose City neighborhood of Portland. The landlord raised their rent by \$300, and she and her two younger siblings went to live with other friends and extended family members while her mother slept in her car and continued working near the Portland Airport. This experience proved to be devastating for this young woman. She ultimately graduated, but in the interim two years she missed several days of school, stayed in youth shelters downtown off and on, and began having "survival sex" to earn money for basic necessities. One day she said to me, sobbing, "This is not who I am. I don't want my brothers to see me doing this."

Indeed, this is NOT the kind of life our young people should have to live. This student's story is far from unique; I could literally list dozens and dozens of students who have had similar experiences.

Here's another one: A 19-year-old trans woman I worked with, "Mia", became homeless after being evicted from her first apartment for no-cause. She had no "proof", but always felt like her apartment manager did not approve of her sexuality/gender identity. Her family had kicked her out when she was fifteen; she had no safety net. At the time, she had a steady job working at a coffee shop, and was taking classes part-time. She wanted to become a nurse, hoping to make health care more accessible and welcoming for all - including trans people and mixed race young people, like her. After she became homeless, she, too, began engaging in survival sex to earn enough money to cover sleeping at a motel. One night, hoping to earn some cash, she got in a car on a busy highway. The driver turned out to be a trans-phobic man - who murdered her. For this young woman, housing instability was literally a death sentence.

Can you imagine what it must be like for a teenager to have no idea where they will sleep? To have nowhere to sit quietly and do homework, to write poetry, to make blueberry muffins to take to their track team? To get dressed for prom? To get dressed for school in the morning? To practice the flute, or to wrestle with siblings on the floor? To apply for college? To find respite from what is an already chaotic, difficult period for many young people? Oregon has one of the worst graduation rates in the country. There is without a doubt an intimate link between housing stability and success in school. Our state cannot afford to NOT act swiftly to remediate this growing problem.

My fellow educators and I are counting on you to vote yes on HB 2004. 4 in 10 Oregon households rent their homes and need protection from evictions without cause, as well as extreme and sudden rent increases. We must act now. We cannot build our way out of this problem. Please support HB 2004A to provide fairness and stability for the millions of Oregonians who are renters. Thank you.

-Erin Goodling  
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