

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

Interchurch Center, Suite B ■ 0245 SW Bancroft Street ■ Portland, Oregon 97239
phone (503) 221-1054 ■ *fax* (503) 223-7007 ■ *Web site* www.emoregon.org

May 3, 2017

Dear Chair Gelser and Members of the Senate Committee on Human Services,

We at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) respectfully urge your support of HB 2004A to end no-cause evictions and to repeal the statewide prohibition on rent stabilization, providing economic security to the approximately 40% of Oregonians who rent their homes.

We believe that all persons deserve a safe, stable and affordable place to call home. However, current policy permits landlords to evict tenants without providing cause, sometimes with as little as 30 days' notice, and additionally increase rental costs by extreme and unlimited amounts. At growing rates Oregon families are experiencing the negative effects of rent increases and no-cause evictions, which threaten the stability and freedoms of our communities.

As rents continue to rise, families are asked to choose between paying their rent or purchasing essential survival materials, such as food and medicine. Our clients at the Northeast Emergency Food Program – a food pantry in NE Portland – make these choices for themselves and their children tragically often. Hunger or eviction. Health or warm clothing.

Educational opportunities are undermined as Oregon families worry about where to live amid this crisis. A landlord's exorbitant rent increase or unjust eviction can force a child and their family to sever crucial ties with teachers, classmates, mentors and supportive family and neighbors. Research directly links homelessness and housing instability with negative educational outcomes creating lasting effects into adulthood. These include lower performance on standardized tests, repeating grades, absenteeism and increased dropout rates.¹

No cause evictions are causing families to lose their homes and experience immense financial hardship and risk homelessness. In the 2015-16 school year, 21,340 children across the state of Oregon experienced homelessness, disrupting their education and threatening their parents' ability to maintain their employment. Seeking to prevent displacement, this bill protects the needs of Oregonians susceptible to forced relocation and potential discrimination through housing insecurity.

Finally, the current housing crisis is disproportionately targeting the stability and safety of the most vulnerable in our society. We ask you to recognize the danger to human dignity that no-cause evictions are perpetuating, particularly on communities of color, seniors, people with disabilities and parents of young children.

Thank you for your continued efforts to address the needs of every one of our communities, and please support HB 2004A.

Sincerely,
Britt Conroy
Public Policy Director, EMO

¹https://tacomahousing.net/sites/default/files/print_pdf/Education/Urban%20Institute%20THA%20Homelessness%20and%20Education%202014-12-22.pdf