



May 3, 2017

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

Chair Gelsler, Vice-Chair Olsen, members of the committee:

We've heard this statistic before, but it's worth repeating: 4 in 10 Oregon households are renters.

That's nearly 1.5 million Oregonians across our state, in your districts and in mine, who are vulnerable to unpredictable displacement because our current law allows for nearly unfettered and unilateral tenant removal. At any time, with no reason.

At the same time, we have incredibly low vacancy rates, and escalating rents. More and more people moving to our state, and supply has not kept up with demand. This creates intense pressures that make it easier for bad actors to prey on tenants, refusing to make repairs, threatening eviction, discriminating – and no-cause eviction is a tool that is too easily misused with impunity, undermining our state's habitability and fair housing protections.

Earlier this year we celebrated the 49th anniversary of the Fair Housing Act. Despite this landmark law from 1968 prohibiting discrimination in the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, or religion, we see far too many cases of eviction due to tenants' identities. Oregonians particularly vulnerable to displacement are people of color, those who work for low wages, seniors, and those with disabilities on fixed incomes.

Escalating rents have the same impact as eviction – an economic eviction. This is not just a Portland problem – in fact, a recent Lending Tree study showed that the city in the nation with the greatest rent increases in the last 5 years was Bend, Oregon. Number 2 on the list in the nation? Prineville.<sup>1</sup>

The study measured changes in cities based on rent prices, home values, foreclosures, influx of new businesses, and the diversity of population changes. Four Oregon cities were in the top ten – Bend, Salem, Eugene, and Portland. Our communities are changing fast, and we need to allow local jurisdictions the flexibility to address changing markets and allow people who have built these communities to continue to live in them rather than be priced out.

No-cause eviction or economic eviction – these can force families into homelessness. This crisis is impacting our schools, businesses, employees, and for some of us, our families and friends.

Some have suggested that the solution to this problem is supply. And yes, supply will help. The recent rate of underbuilding is indeed surprising given our current economic recovery, and we will continue to work hard to support a variety of policy approaches that supports further supply in the legislature.

However, we must act now, to ensure stability for families, children, seniors, and everyone in our communities, and to give local governments the tools they need to prevent displacement in their communities.

This bill is just and measured and I urge your support.

Representative Karin Power

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lendingtree.com/info/what-are-the-fastest-changing-cities-in-america>

