

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

I am writing to urge your support on HB 2004, because Oregonians deserve right to safe and stable homes. I am writing you both as a Social Worker, whose clients have been severely impacted by our housing crisis, and as an individual who has experienced both no-cause evictions and large rent increases.

As a case manager, I witnessed no-cause evictions being utilized as a discriminatory tactic to force individuals with disabilities out of their housing, and often onto the street. Individuals struggling with mental health disabilities face stigma and oppression at every turn in our society, and the housing market is the most overt example of that discrimination. The folks that I provided service to would often be issued no cause evictions due to the overt symptoms of their illness. No cause evictions served as a tool of systemic oppression and has resulted in our mentally ill neighbors being forced out of housing and onto the streets.

Leases have many, many causes for which a termination of tenancy is just. This bill does not limit the right of landlords to evict tenants for damaging property, engaging in illegal activity, or causing disturbances. It simply places the burden on the landlord to show that they are not acting in a way that is discriminatory or unfair to individuals and families. This is not too much to ask.

Lifting the preemption on rent stabilization is an important component of this legislation, as we see communities of color, individuals on fixed incomes, and working families being forced out of many of our cities. There are smart ways to implement rent stabilization, and that conversation should be allowed to happen at the local level. The coupling of rent stabilization and ending no-cause evictions is crucial, as rent increases can serve as a mechanism for forcing folks out of their homes.

In summary, please support HB 2004. It is a necessary piece of legislation not only for housing in Oregon, but for social justice in Oregon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Gabrielle Swisher
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