

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES AND HOUSING

Testimony: HB 2004A

5/4/17 @ 10:00AM

Many people have a preconceived notion that you must be ruthless and heartless to be a landlord these days. With reports of landlords jacking up tenants' rents 100 percent, that perception is easy to validate, especially when it contributes to the displacement of up to 10 percent of students in some elementary school districts. That's a lot of kids losing their best friends and educational stability to greedy owners who are uprooting their communities.

But such owners don't represent all landlords. In fact, many of those imposing these massive rent increases don't even reside in the neighborhoods where they own rentals, have kids that attend school with the children who live in the affected homes or even work in the same communities. They live out of state, while doing big business in communities such as our own.

Ethical landlords don't give 100 percent rent increases or raise rents every three months. They don't send you a "no-cause" notice to vacate because you had a baby or changed jobs. Ethical landlords don't immediately file eviction paperwork when a tenant pays a millisecond after midnight on the fourth of the month. You can be a decent human being and still be a good landlord. Ethical landlording and running a profitable business are not mutually exclusive activities. You can still enforce the rules, provide quality housing and make a profit while managing with a conscience.

Landlording comes with a great deal of power over people's housing. Yes, there is a massive housing shortage that has tipped the supply-and-demand scale heavily in favor of landlords. However, sending out large rent increases -- or no-cause notices to an entire low-income apartment complex so you can rent the units on Airbnb for \$100 or more -- for the purpose of reaping exorbitant profits is a breach of integrity and an abuse of power. It may be legal, but it is also morally indefensible.

Landlord association representatives and hired lobbyists who are unwilling to discuss how to curb the unethical and extreme practices of the industry purport to be defending landlord rights. Yet they ultimately are doing an extreme disservice to the constituents they serve by risking the passing of legislation without their input and effectively dissolving Oregon's long standing and successful Landlord Tenant Coalition.

The coalition was created for the purpose of landlords and tenants coming together and mutually contributing to the improvement of housing laws and regulations in Oregon. When the landlord representatives refused to discuss important issues from tenants at a coalition meeting last year, they instantly created a void of ethical landlord representation. That, in turn, prompted tenants to bypass the coalition entirely and to go directly to their state representatives, many of whom don't want to see their communities fractured and gentrified through the extortion of tenants. Ethical landlords don't want to see that either. Landlords need to resume full participation in the coalition or risk the passage of legislation without their representation.

I pledge to operate as an ethical landlord and am willing to pull up a chair to the table. I hope other landlords choose to do the same.

*Respectfully,*

*Heather Buch, owner of Preferred Northwest Property Management in Eugene, OR*