

To Members of Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response:

My wife and I, together with her brother and his wife, bought a single 4-plex in the city of Gresham about 10 years ago. We own no other rental property. At the time of our purchase, this property was severely distressed with squatters living in two of the units while the other two were uninhabitable. Garbage and abandoned vehicles spotted the front yard and piles of trash filled the side yard, back yards, and garages. We spent the better part of a year working on this property almost every single day after we got off work from our day jobs in order to rebuild this neighborhood blight into beautiful apartments that we were proud to rent. Neighbors often stopped by as we were working on the property to thank us for “transforming” their neighborhood, and at one point two city patrol officers dropped by to acknowledge that our efforts helped curtail gang activity in the area. We put our life savings into this property in the hopes of it providing an income stream in our retirements, but current events threaten to put that dream in jeopardy.

Recent emergency decrees proposed or enacted by city, county, and state authorities appear to give tenants the right to rent relief (either permanent or temporary) at the expense of individual landlords. I cannot begin to tell you how many ways these actions can jeopardize our financial well-being, possibly to the point of losing our ability to provide decent and affordable housing for our tenants. While I certainly agree that we, as a community, should help those who experience financial hardship because of the pandemic threat, it is wrong to believe that individual landlords can (and should) shoulder the burden of providing free housing to those affected. While providing the “free” housing, we are still expected to pay our mortgage, property tax, insurance, maintenance and repairs. In other words, we will be forced to provide a service mandated by the State with no compensation. In fact, it is worse than that; we will also have to find other sources of income to pay for the ongoing property expenses while no rent money is being received! This is wrong. My wife works full time (for now), and my only source of income is my monthly Social Security check. We can ill afford to support these government mandates without assistance.

I respectfully request that you please consider our situation when you deliberate your policy responses to the coronavirus threat.

Sincerely,

Robert Walsh  
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