

House Housing Committee
Monday, November 23, 2020
10:00 am

Good Morning

Madame Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Meek and Zika and the honorable Committee Members.

My name is Sage Coleman. I am currently serving as the President of the Oregon Rental Housing Association. I use the pronouns, he/him/his.

Thank you for the opportunity to share what I am hearing from our housing providers across the state of Oregon.

Oregonians are suffering. The housing shortage that existed ahead of the Pandemic is threatening to be exacerbated by legislation meant to protect residents of rental housing.

Our thousands of members across the state are suffering financial hardship with the added psychological torture of having basic rights removed while being alienated from their resident clients.

The Executive Order is causing incredible harm to the fabric of Oregon's Housing sector.

I am pleased to be able to report to our members that the work being done within this committee is working hard to identify and address the impact on housing providers as well as residents.

The Oregon Rental Housing Association is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with legislators and tenant advocates. Thank you Madam Chair Fahey for creating an environment where I felt comfortable sharing the views of housing providers.

Below are excerpts from just a few of the emails I have received from a few of our 5,000 members across the state of Oregon.

Melora Halaj, Private Housing Provider

It also might be very helpful, and perhaps more compelling, for landlords to describe actions they are taking to protect themselves. This could include:

1. Taking rental properties off the market entirely when a tenant moves out,
2. Selling the property, which in some neighborhoods will result in loss of rental properties available because they will be occupied by the new owner,
3. Increasing requirements to rent an unoccupied property,

4. Renting only to friends and family.
5. Converting property to vacation rental or home office for rent.

In essence, their actions will wind up hurting the very people they claim to want to help. Personally, I have taken option 1 on a vacant unit and am hoping a family member will move in eventually, but I am also considering selling. Listing it publicly for rent feels like the worst option at present. The last two tenants I had were perfect until month 13 when they became a major problem, so the laws passed a year ago are also of high concern.

Currently it seems like landlords have some rights only prior to a contract being signed. Once a contract is in place, we have very few if any rights, or at least few that are enforceable at present, given the court backlog.

William Spiller

To All Oregon Legislators:

From: William Spiller, Owner of the Spiller Apartments

You are making Oregon laws on the quick to protect our people from a serious Pandemic. The first Pandemic in our Oregon history.

As the elected leaders of our State, you can be thought of as all of our people.

When all of our people (you), create rules that discriminate and bring economic hardship to one subset of the population in favor of a second subset of the population you have been economically short sighted and simply unfair. I say short sighted because you (the people of the whole state) did not take responsibility for your actions.

Rental property owners pay for literally the roof over the heads of tenets.

Rental property owners like myself pay for the water and garbage removal used by the tenets.

Rental property owners pay for refrigerators, ovens and hot water heaters.

Rental property owners pay for tenet vehicle parking.

Also, rental property owners pay for apartment repairs that keep the unit habitable.

A remedy would be for the people as whole to take responsibility for the laws it passed.

The People (you) still demand taxes and utilities to be paid by the rental property owners.

At the end of this pandemic, after rents normalize again, most of my non-paying tenets will owe back rent and be unable to repay it, causing me to carry a debt. I think in all fairness, the whole of the people should pay this debt in the form of a debt swap, past rental debt for property taxes and utilities.

Sincerely,

William Spiller

In summary I would like to add that across the board our housing providers are ready and willing to assist their residents. What our housing providers want most is to be included on the team, treated fairly and collaborated with rather than plotted against. We stand ready to work with the State of Oregon to implement policy that provides assistance to residents so long as our rights are not taken. We know how to work through adversity and we respect the efforts of others to do the same.

Thank You for the opportunity to share the voice of our members across the state,

Sage

Sage Coleman, President
Oregon Rental Housing Association