



FAMILY FORWARD OREGON

Smart policies for today's families.

February 4, 2019

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 608

Tenant Protections for Oregonians

Submitted by Courtney Helstein on behalf of Family Forward Oregon

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 608. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. Our mission is to create a family-friendly Oregon where all families can be economically secure and have the time they need to take care of each other. We believe having a safe and stable home is a critical component of every family's success – it impacts a family's safety and security, their children's educational outcomes, and contributes to economic stability for the entire family. We urge strong support of SB 608 to provide critical protection against unjust eviction and displacement for the 40% of Oregon households who rent their homes.

Many renters in Oregon are low-income families living paycheck-to-paycheck and struggling to make ends meet. For these families, a large rent increase or a no-cause eviction can be devastating; a sudden move can create a significant economic burden when a family has to suddenly come up with thousands of dollars to move and put down as a deposit on a new rental property. Women in Oregon make up 39% of the houseless population and that number continues to grow.¹ Being houseless or having to move farther away from work or childcare can uproot often already precarious care arrangements, dismantle communities and prevent a family from advancing economically.

Rental policies that do not take into account the housing needs of low-income women and women of color, especially those with caregiving responsibilities, are directly linked to the disproportionate number of women in Oregon who live in poverty. No cause evictions and a lack of rent stabilization compound the wage gap for women, who are less likely to be able to afford higher rent and to save for deposits, let alone get on the housing ownership ladder. This is especially true for women of color, who face large gender and race wage and wealth gaps, compounding inequities over generations. For instance, 67.7% of Black Oregonians rent their homes compared to 34.8% of White Oregonians.

Additionally, Oregon women have the second highest rate of asset poverty in the nation, meaning they don't have sufficient savings for unexpected expenses, impacting their ability to maintain or find housing when facing no cause evictions. In fact, 51% of Oregon women are cost burdened by housing expenses.² Stabilizing housing in Oregon will allow women to maintain child care arrangements that are critical to staying in the workforce, save money for critical needs like retirement and future housing, and support their families to thrive.

¹ 2017 Point-in-Time Estimates of Homelessness in Oregon Report. Oregon Housing and Community Services: <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/ISD/RA/2017-Point-in-Time-Estimates-Homelessness-Oregon.pdf>

² Women's Foundation of Oregon, 'Count Her In', 2016.



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Every Oregon family needs affordable and stable housing. SB 608 is a reasonable approach to protecting Oregon renters who currently lack even the most basic protections. It creates a just-cause eviction standard that will require a legitimate reason for lease termination, such as a tenant violating a rental or lease agreement or due to a landlord's business or family necessity. This is a standard currently being used in tens of thousands of units in Oregon and should be the standard for the state.

SB 608 has two critical components, both of which are essential to easing the housing crises on the most vulnerable:

1. It ends the unjust use of no-cause evictions, ensuring that tenants who follow the rules are not ripped from the homes unfairly; and
2. It will help stabilize rents so that tenants can have some modicum of economic stability.

While there isn't a single solution to Oregon's housing crisis, protecting Oregonians who rent their homes from sudden displacement is one of the most critical. Oregon communities are stronger when everyone has a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. We must act now to ensure the bright future of our state.

We believe that every family in Oregon should have a stable and secure home and urge your support for SB 608.