



February 2, 2019

Chair Fagan and Members of the Senate Housing Committee,

Forward Together asks for your strong support of SB 608 to provide critical protection against unjust eviction and displacement for the 40% of Oregon families across the state who rent their homes.

Forward Together works in Oregon and nationally to win rights, recognition and resources for all families. Since our founding in 1989, we have continually fought to dismantle the ways our society marginalizes us based on race, gender and sexuality. Today, we build courage and foster connection among our multi-racial community of change makers to secure the rights, recognition and resources all families need to thrive. SB 608 takes a much needed step in that work by addressing some of the historic and ongoing discrimination in our housing and rental market.

The historic barriers to homeownership in the US for communities of color continued well into the 1990s in Oregon - long after the Federal Housing Act of 1968. This has resulted in less opportunities for communities of color to build and sustain wealth and stability. The numbers show these disparities in housing and wealth clearly: roughly $\frac{1}{3}$ of Black families in Oregon own their homes, while white home ownership is roughly 60%.¹ Black families also experience more housing cost burden than whites. According to the 2010 census, 69% of Black renters in Multnomah County were spending more than 30% of their income on housing compared to 50.7% of white families.² For households headed by single women of color, Black and Latina women are twice as likely to rent rather than own a home.³ This shows that families of color are not just spending more income on housing, but are more heavily impacted by housing instability.

¹ <https://www.tfff.org/sites/default/files/OregonByTheNumbers2018.pdf>

² https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1135&context=socwork_fac

³ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/07/19/more-u-s-households-are-renting-than-at-any-point-in-50-years/>



Today, we see those disparities persist and deepen by outdated policies that allow landlords to evict tenants for no reason or raise rents that displace tenants. No-cause evictions disproportionately impact communities of color, often in a discriminatory or retaliatory manner. With no-cause evictions, renters are not told why they are being kicked out and therefore have little recourse to defend themselves against unfair or unlawful eviction. As a result, many renters avoid asking for repairs even if their health or safety depends on it. Families across Oregon are experiencing extreme rent increases that are forcing them out of their homes and out of their communities. Even if displacement does not occur, large rent increases mean families spend more of their income on housing, and less on other basic necessities like food, medicine, and heat. Addressing rental instability and no-cause evictions will make it less likely that Oregonians sink into debt or lose their home. This is one step that can help curb some of the inequities in our economy faced by communities of color.

SB 608 creates a for-cause eviction standard, requiring sufficient notice and a legitimate reason before a landlord can evict tenants who are paying rent on time and following the terms of their rental agreement. It also provides rent stabilization protection, protecting tenants against sudden rent spikes. Forward Together believes this policy is a step in right direction and we ask for your support of this policy.

Sincerely,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Advocacy Manager

Forward Together