



Testimony in Support of SB 608
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Chair Fagan and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of the Oregon Nurses Association in support of Senate Bill 608. The Oregon Nurses Association is Oregon's oldest and largest nursing union and professional association and is proud to represent over 15,000 registered nurses who work in almost every health care setting -- from large hospitals to small local clinics, from corrections to school-based health centers and in community-based public health.

As such, Oregon nurses acutely understand that stable and affordable housing is an issue that effects the health of Oregonians across the state. In their practice, nurses see direct correlations between substandard housing and easily preventable diseases like lead poisoning and asthma. This is why the World Health Organization suggests that poor housing conditions are one of the mechanisms through which social and environmental inequality translates into health inequality.¹

Mounting research also suggests that the mental stress of poor-quality and unstable housing ultimately impacts physical health. Toxic, unrelenting stress can cause permanent biological harm that can lead to diabetes, heart disease and depression later in life. Researchers have found that when children are exposed to stress early and/or for long periods, it can affect their cardiovascular system, immune response, metabolic regulation and brain chemistry – all of which have long term effects on learning, behavior and both physical and mental health.²

There's also a profound impact on health care workforce: without enough affordable, stable housing in more rural communities, health providers are too often unable to live in the communities that they want to care for.

As nurses, ONA members recognize housing as a significant social determinant of health: when community members have affordable access to stable and safe housing, they are better able to address their most basic needs, leading to improved health outcomes. Evictions and economic displacement impact our entire system by placing an immense economic burden on our communities through increased demands on social services, shelters, and hospitals by families who become displaced and under-resourced.

SB 608 will end no-cause evictions, ensuring that families can stay in their homes, and help stabilize rents so families can appropriately prepare for fair rent increases. This is the first step forward in helping address the critical connection between housing and health in Oregon, which is why ONA urges your support of SB 608. Thank you.

¹ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/277465/WHO-CED-PHE-18.10-eng.pdf?ua=1>

² https://medium.com/bhpn-crosswalk/unstable-unsafe-housing-damages-childrens-brains-9da54b267d50?fbclid=IwAR1ZGdnleMtb4I3xkBTkUMOhv2qQMCT7HXIOIoYynNpE7_jEe6dCZuoJU