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February 4, 2019

Senate Committee on Housing
Chair Shemia Fagan
900 Court St. NE, S-409,
Salem, Oregon 97301

My name is Anna Peña and I live in Eugene. I am currently a senior at the University of Oregon and a full-time employee at a behavioral therapies and addiction services non-profit. I have been a tenant in Oregon for over four years. I know that housing gives people an opportunity to live better lives, and to succeed everyone needs a safe place to call home. In Lane County one out of every three renters is spending over 50% of their income on rent, and I am one of them. My number one dream growing up was to attend college in Oregon, and I made that come true by moving to Eugene in 2015. However, I quickly experienced obstacles when attempting to rent a place. From 2015 to 2017 I lived with five other roommates in a house that was less than 1200 square ft. and was still barely able to afford my rent. During this time, I struggled to make ends meet and began working over 40 hours while being a full-time student to have safe housing. Three months later, my rental developed a serious black mold infestation that was detrimental to my health. It covered the entire area of my bed, kitchen, and bathroom. When we approached our rental company about it- we did not receive any assistance and the mold only continued to grow. As a student, I felt vulnerable, helpless, and exhausted. The mold began to become a major health concern throughout the year. I was forced to miss class just to meet work obligations to afford rent and put food on the table. I did not have any support to rectify an unhealthy living situation, or the ability to find new housing until I was forced to due to a 15% rent increase. Ultimately, housing insecurity has been one of the biggest setbacks for my education and personal health. However, I know that I am still a lucky case. At my workplace, I see the severe effects of housing instability on addiction and behavioral health, and know that the lack of a safe place to sleep at night is a key factor in these issues. People who rent their homes like me are depending on the Legislature to act to provide basic protections and stability. We know we need to address a range of issues to solve the housing problems our communities are facing, and it is critical the Legislature act now to pass SB 608 to ensure a better future for Oregonians. Please vote yes on SB 608. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter, and for the work you do in Salem.

Sincerely,
Anna Peña