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Chair Fagan and Members of the Committee,

My name is Bob Brown, and I am a leader with Metropolitan Alliance for Common Good (MACG), a broad-based organization of 25 faith, labor, healthcare, and community non-profits in the metropolitan tri-county area.

We organize around key pressures on families in our institutions. Affordable housing emerged in 2015 as the top issue facing our members, and as the housing crisis has continued to grow more severe and pervasive, more of our families and members of the community face the constant threat of displacement and the possibility of homelessness.

I am here today on behalf of MACG to urge your support of Senate Bill 608 as a critical first step in bringing relief to tenants statewide.

We recognize that this bill brings a measure of relief and assurance for all tenants in Oregon that exorbitant rent increases of 20%, 40% or greater that throw families into crisis situations will stop. This is a good and essential beginning.

We're concerned, however, for those who will be left out. For those families who already experience a 10% rent increase as a crippling event leaving them with few, if any, options.

We hear regularly from older adults on fixed incomes, people with disabilities and a high percentage of Latino and refugee families in our member institutions that one more increase at the level that this bill allows will result in displacement – a move, a different school for their children, a new child care arrangement, a longer commute to a job – disrupting family life, community connections, and overall economic stability. Any forced displacement has an impact on all of us.

Much more is needed to further protect our families from evictions and displacements. MACG leaders are committed to working with ally organizations and Oregon legislators to improve opportunities and protections for families, especially through the institution of local controls to enable communities to address housing challenges unique to their communities.

We're here today in support of Senate Bill 608, but we'll be back to work toward greater relief for our most vulnerable members.

Thank you.

Bob Brown
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