



Deborah Kafoury **Multnomah County Chair**

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Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing,

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 608, which will help local communities respond to an ongoing housing crisis that continues to threaten thousands of households across Oregon with homelessness.

Two years ago, I testified in favor of a similar bill in front of the Senate Human Services Committee. At that time, I told the story of the Normandy Apartments in Northeast Portland where the landlord was preparing to increase rents by 100 percent. In the end, the landlord rescinded the proposed increases, but terminated the leases. The Normandy was home to twenty-six school-age children.

These stories are not unusual.

More recently, a participant in Multnomah County's Healthy Birth Initiative came forward to tell a personal story about struggling to pay rent. In her letter, the young single mom-of-two traced her swift, silent journey from being unable to pay rent, to eviction, and then to homelessness with a sense of inevitability and tragic acceptance.

It is long past time to accept that the market is not going to "correct" for the struggling families who live paycheck to paycheck, and who are forced to make choices they should not have to make: food, rent, or healthcare. It is time to accept that a home is a right, not a luxury.

Our existing tools are effective but they are no match for the market. Short-term rent assistance and case management can only do so much in the face of high prices, low vacancies and speculative investment.

It is time to accept common-sense regulation of the housing market because we have one choice left: continue to do what we've been doing -- and hope that unseen market forces intervene before, or we can do something about it.

Senate Bill 608 is our latest and best chance to take on a generational crisis that is threatening our quality of life, and tearing apart communities that we all know and love. We can give tenants the peace of mind of knowing that they won't be denied their home without cause and without reason, and we can give communities across Oregon the assurance that unchecked rent increases will no longer cause thousands of families to slide into homelessness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large capital 'D'.

Deborah Kafoury