

To: Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chairs Noble and Sanchez, and members of the Committee

As an Oregon landlord and the owner of a successful, 23-year-old Oregon property management company, I support Senate Bill 608. Our current, unbalanced system, which increasingly puts renters at increased risk of discrimination and homelessness, is unsustainable. SB 608 is a change that makes us and makes our economy stronger.

While not perfect, SB 608 will protect tenants who pay their rent on time and follow the rules. The bill stops unfair displacement through a no-cause eviction notice or extreme rent increase, while also enabling landlords to earn a living and effectively manage their properties.

Our current laws have created a system with too much discretion resting in the hands of one group, property managers, and we know that unlimited discretion in any system will always, inevitably, amplify the impacts of bias, discrimination and disparity. Regulation is no guarantee of fairness, but the lack of it is guaranteed to result in inequity.

To address bad actors among existing residents, the bill retains the for-cause eviction process and ensures that landlords have some tools to manage their properties. As a father, a neighbor, and a landlord I believe that a tenant who is committing harassment, domestic violence, or sexual assault ought to be terminated through use of the shorter for-cause notice periods. That is the best way to remove a dangerous tenant while also providing due process. Using a no-cause notice to evict a bad tenant is irresponsible to other tenants and also allows the bad actor to move on to the next housing without a clear, fully explained record of that person's previous actions.

A lot of Oregon's families are living paycheck to paycheck, and too many are just one paycheck away from losing the roof over their heads. The bill allows landlords the leeway we seek to set rents within the parameters of up to 7% plus the consumer price index. The bill will help protect against unreasonable rent spikes within a tenancy but allows landlords to set rents as we wish at the beginning of a tenancy.

There were 22,000 homeless children in Oregon last year. Evictions and rent increases are among the leading causes of homelessness. Research has repeatedly shown the link between rapid rent increases and homelessness. I don't believe any of us want a society where our children are displaced by discrimination, retaliation, or extreme price gouging.

We need to consider many approaches to our housing crisis, including increasing supply, preserving currently affordable housing, and educating people on the laws.

Like with any new law, the legislature will need to be prepared to tackle any unintended consequences. While not perfect, SB 608 is a critical step forward in the goal of ensuring that all Oregonians have a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. We cannot wait for the perfect solution to address a growing crisis.

I support Senate Bill 608 in its entirety, and I urge the House to move this bill quickly to Governor Brown's desk. It's time that we all do a little more to ensure everyone has a safe, stable and affordable place to call home, free from discrimination, and in the process, make our home state more sustainable for all of us.

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