Yes on SB 608. Southern Oregonians need renter protections and stable rents now.

Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chair Noble and Vice Chair Sanchez, and members of the committee,

I am writing to encourage you to take urgent action on the housing crisis and to protect Oregon renters by passing SB 608.

The housing crisis has hit hard everywhere but has been particularly deeply felt in southern Oregon. As a long time resident of the Rogue Valley and city councilor in the small town of Phoenix, Oregon, I have seen the impact this crisis has had on the community, my constituents, and my family and friends.

 While I'm not here to speak officially on behalf of my city or council, I do hope I can share some personal perspective as an elected leader in southern Oregon.

With a 1-2% vacancy rate throughout the Rogue Valley, there is a clear need add more affordable and multifamily units to our housing stock. But it would be a big oversimplification to think this issue can be resolved by increasing supply alone. Our local policy makers are doing the best we can to address the housing crisis by making land use and policy changes. But these changes are not enough. We need state level rent stabilization and renter protections NOW.

With wages stagnating and housing costs exploding, too many in our community are struggling to find and keep a place to live. Families, working people and seniors have been thrown into crisis as they are increasingly becoming displaced from their homes.

Nearly half of all families in southern Oregon are considered cost burdened, meaning they pay more than 30% of their income towards housing costs. For Jackson county renters, 1 in 3– and three-quarters of low-income renters – are paying more than 50 percent of their income in rent. That doesn't leave a lot left to live on.

 For those of us who rent or who have friends and family who do, we know that an unexpected rent increase or an eviction notice is an incredibly destabilizing event. Some renters in our community are facing significant rent increases every few months. For people on fixed incomes or working low wage-and increasingly professional level- jobs, increases like these can put people on the streets. Without immediate policy action, renters can continue to be evicted at any time, for no cause, often with no money and nowhere to go.

Basic renter protections including adequate notice for landlord-based and for-cause evictions as well as relocation assistance, are key to addressing this crisis. Just this month, I learned that my mother is facing displacement from landlord-based eviction for the second time in six months with only 30 days notice. She is currently living in a trailer on my brother's property. I worry about her having stability and security even though she works full time and always has. I worry about her being cold or getting carbon monoxide poisoning because she is forced to use propane space heaters. The stress and uncertainty of eviction paired with inadequate time to find new housing ripples through every area of a person's life including their ability to have

a stable work and family life. That insecurity doesn't just threaten individuals, it threatens our society as a whole.

Oregonians are in real crisis. It's time to start seeing stable housing as a basic right and a cornerstone of healthy communities. That means the legislature needs to step up and support renters who shouldn't have to fend for themselves against the powerful and monied interests of landlord associations and property management companies.

Standing up for renters and for our communities as a whole means ending no cause evictions, ensuring 90 day notice for all evictions and protecting renters from unreasonable rent hikes. SB 608 is a good start in the right direction for renter protections though I am still concerned that a 7% annual cap on rent increases doesn't do enough to protect renters and hope the committee will consider taking stronger action.

Please stand with us by passing SB 608. Thank you.

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