



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

Ted Wheeler, Mayor
Amanda Fritz, Commissioner
Nick Fish, Commissioner
Jo Ann Hardesty, Commissioner
Chloe Eudaly, Commissioner

February 18, 2019

Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
900 Court Street NE, HR 50
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 608

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland urges your support for SB 608. Oregon continues to experience an unprecedented housing crisis and SB 608 will create more stability for renters by establishing a just-cause eviction standard and rent stabilization policy.

Portland is taking a comprehensive approach to addressing the housing crisis. The City continues to implement the Portland Housing Bond, with 630 units completed or in the pipeline. The City has taken steps to streamline permitting for affordable housing development, increase opportunities for residential infill development, mitigate displacement through a renter relocation assistance ordinance, and implement an inclusionary housing policy and construction excise tax to support affordable housing. Last year, the City's affordable housing production reached an all-time high, with the opening of over 800 newly affordable units. However, we must do more.

Too many Oregonians continue to struggle to find stable housing. In Portland, nearly half of people rent their homes, and the average Portland household can no longer afford the typical two- or three-bedroom unit without being cost burdened. Moreover, average Black, Latinx, Native American, and Pacific Islander households in Portland cannot afford the typical rental unit of any size without being cost burdened. Many families are at risk of experiencing homelessness due to no-cause evictions or dramatic rent increases they cannot afford.

SB 608 is a critical step in ensuring access to stable housing. Currently, landlords may terminate a tenancy without providing a reason. These evictions severely disrupt tenants' lives, put them at risk of homelessness, and can serve as a cover for retaliation when a tenant requests a repair. Establishing a just-cause eviction standard will still allow landlords to terminate a tenancy, but for specific tenant-based reasons (e.g., nonpayment of rent or other violations of a lease) or for landlord-based reasons (e.g., the landlord or a family member moving into the home). A just-cause eviction standard will create a fair system for tenants and landlords alike. SB 608 will also stabilize the rate of rent increases for tenants. Though SB 608 is an important step forward, much work remains to ensure that tenants in Portland—and throughout Oregon—have access to affordable and stable housing.

We urge you to move SB 608 forward with a do pass recommendation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ted Wheeler
Mayor



Amanda Fritz
Commissioner



Nick Fish
Commissioner



Jo Ann Hardesty
Commissioner



Chloe Eudaly
Commissioner