

This is my written testimony in support of HB 2982:

My neighbors and I on SW 182nd Ave in Beaverton, OR between Longacre and Moore St requested help from the Washington County Sheriff and the Washington County Health Department to take action and clean up the property at 1198 SW 182nd Ave for 14 months, from September of 2017 to November 2018. This problem house is right in the middle of our nice suburban neighborhood here in Aloha, OR. The police raided the house several times, however the situation at this property just kept getting worse every day. This became a very serious health and safety hazard, with everyone in the neighborhood living in fear. The house was what is called a zombie house, because it had been foreclosed on, the "owner" moved out, squatters moved in and then accountability for it bounced back and forth between Fannie Mae and Wells Fargo every few months for over 2 years. If not for the diligent work by numerous neighbors who constantly called the Washington County Sheriff and Health Dept, and constantly called Fannie Mae, Wells Fargo, and constantly called our local, state and federal representatives, this house would still be a Zombie house with all the following problems:

- Dozens of different strangers coming and going from the house all night and day (drug addicts, dealers, squatters, etc.)
- This house had no garbage or water service for over 10 months
- Over 2000 cubic square feet of garbage piled in the back yard and more trash added every day (pictures attached)
- Hundreds of plastic bottles of urine piled against the fence and several more tossed out the upstairs window daily (pictures attached)
- Occupants seen defecating in the back yard regularly
- Rat infestation in all of the surrounding yards for over 8 months
- Armed SWAT team raided the property every few months with loud stun-grenades exploding at 5:00 AM, a tank-like vehicle with spotlights on the front lawn, megaphone announcements to the people in side to come out with their hands up, heavily armed comando-like police officers surrounding the property, raiding the property, dozens of wretched people being taken from the house and lined up in the street in handcuffs
- Most of the windows were smashed out with large shards of broken glass hanging in the window frames due to fights among the squatters living there
- Police and ambulance called to the house several times per week due to people squatting there getting in fights, having seizures, etc.
- Broken down cars left by the occupants in the neighborhood, and several cars being impounded by the police
- Occupants of the house fighting in the street frequently, yelling and throwing things at each other
- Extremely unsafe situation for anyone, especially kids to be outside in the neighborhood at any time
- Horrible odors emanating from the house and property due to buckets of urine being dumped out the window into the rain gutters

- Within a 3 to 4 block radius of the house, garbage was left on the street, drugs deals were being made, vagrants were frequently seen sitting around, broken furniture, shopping carts full of junk . . . all from people coming and going to this house
- Everyone in the neighborhood living in constant fear and stress

Due to the neighbors banding together and constantly calling the Sheriff, Health Dept, Fannie Mae, Wells Fargo and local, state and federal representatives, pressure was applied to Fannie Mae and they eventually got the needed paperwork submitted so the Washington County Sheriff could evict the squatters. The house is now empty. All the human waste and trash has been hauled away. The rats have been exterminated.

The main point I want to make is that nobody at the local, county, state or federal level had any authority to force the occupants to clean up, or force the bank to clean up, or evict the occupants even under such horrifying conditions. **The fact that squatters can take up residence in a house and create such filthy and unsafe conditions it absolutely uncivilized and unacceptable in society today.** There needs to be legal tools available to local health and safety officials so they can deal with these situations. I understand that the government should not be allowed to search and seize people's property without proper cause, but in situations such as this, there needs to be more than just fines and liens which easily go ignored by squatters and banks. The banks that gave the loans need to be held accountable when the home falls into foreclosure and the property becomes a health and safety hazard. If the banks do not take action, the local authorities need to have significant power to restore peace and security in the neighborhood.

Thank You,
Gerard Fleck
1184 SW 182nd Ave.
Beaverton, OR 97003
503-927-2959