

COURTNEY NERON
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 26



Testimony in Support of SB 1557

February 2, 2022

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee,

As a State Rep and member of the House Housing Committee, I understand that our Oregon communities are facing rising housing costs and increased homelessness. **I support the important pilot project that SB 1557 provides.** With a number of federal affordable housing contracts set to expire at various sites across the state in coming years, we must welcome strategic ways to preserve the affordable housing options, especially when these complexes are sold to investors who plan to transition the complexes to market rate. **We must maintain affordable housing stock and protect residents who currently live in subsidized low-income housing.**

I will never forget when I was getting to know constituents and hear their issues in my district, one individual opened their door in their apartment complex and as we talked about the issues they were most concerned with, he said "I have been priced out of Portland. I've been priced out of Tigard. And now I'm getting priced out of Wilsonville. I have cerebral palsy and need a ground floor apartment on a bus line, but I'm on the edge of bus lines and will have no way to get to work if I move farther out. My rent is going up by \$100/month and I don't know where I will go." Another woman in the same complex told me, "I am on a fixed income and my rent just went up. Now I have to choose between my medicine and or paying my rent." These are very real decisions that many Oregonians face, especially when rents rise.

This pilot project in SB 1557 will allow residents in two housing complexes to pilot an assistance program that will prevent displacement. When we hear feedback on this project, we will be able to determine what worked, didn't work, how it could be operated in the future and how it can effectively be rolled out to support tenants across the state in similar complexes that are losing federal subsidies. While I would prefer for this to be a larger program from the outset, I understand the pilot project is necessary at this time.

One of the complexes that would participate in the program is Woodspring Apartments, just outside House District 26 and blocks from one of my childhood homes. It is one of few subsidized affordable complexes in Tigard and has historically been home for many seniors with disabilities or those receiving Supplemental Security Incomes (SSI). Last year, the residents were told that after 30 years, the building no longer required senior living and that the owner would soon be bringing all units to market-rate-rent, a little over \$47,000 a year. This decision put 172 low-income senior citizens at risk of having no place to go after calling Woodspring home for so many years. When housing is unstable in one community, it impacts nearby communities, as well. Woodspring residents need support to stay housed.

We must act now to preserve affordable rents for these vulnerable residents.
I urge your support of SB 1557.

Sincerely,

State Representative Courtney Neron