



**Testimony in Support of SB 611**  
**Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi, Unite Oregon**  
**March 27, 2023**

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 611, an essential piece of legislation that would lower the cap on rent increases. My name is Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi, and I am the Housing Policy Coordinator with Unite Oregon. We are an organization made up of 46,000 members and are proudly led by black, indigenous, people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty all across Oregon.

I grew up in government-subsidized housing. My mother has lived in the same apartment complex in NE Portland for almost 20 years. Every year, her rent has increased, and every month, she is using more than half of her income to pay for a place she will never own. My mother has never made more than \$30,000 annually, so you can imagine the great deal of stress she underwent in trying to raise two children while making below the poverty line. We had no funds for urgent needs or accidents. We were always one medical emergency away from losing our housing. When a car broke down, there was no telling where we would get the money to fix it.

From the testimonies you have heard, and will be hearing from today, it is clear that housing is essential to living, it should not be a privilege, but rather a right. What we are dealing with is people's livelihoods and wellbeing. Landlords and realtors sitting here today, will tell you they don't agree with this as it has been hard to keep up with the rising cost of maintaining their properties, something that I say, we both agree with. The cost of renting is expensive and we have struggled to keep up. However, their energy is misplaced and they should not be relying on their tenants to make up the cost. Greater factors, like inflation and low minimum wage, are the core issues, and making renters pay the price is not the way.

Rent across the state has increased significantly and it has become nearly impossible for people to keep up with the cost of living, especially for low-income and communities of color. Communities of color are more likely to be in financial distress. More than 6 out of 10 renters who were behind on payments are a part of this community. Our communities facing historical and systemic barriers to jobs, housing, health care, opportunity and wealth are paying an unfair price for Oregon's unfair housing options. When housing takes up more than half of your income, it takes one incident to push you over the edge and a majority of Oregonians are just one



paycheck short of facing homelessness. There is no justice in that for renters, nor landlords.

Unite Oregon urges you to ensure SB 611 makes it out of your committee. Your constituents are counting on you to do the right thing.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Aguilar-Arizmendi  
Policy Coordinator  
Unite Oregon