

Written Testimony in Support of SB 611B

Cynthia Dettman, President of the Wingspread Mobile Home Park Residents' Association
Ashland, Or.

Board Member, OSTA (Oregon's nonprofit advocacy group for mobile home residents)

June 20, 2023

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and members of the committee:

My name is Cynthia Dettman, I am a senior, President of the Wingspread Mobile Home Park Residents' Association in Ashland and board member of Oregon State Tenants Association; I am urging you to support the passage of Senate Bill 611B.

As a mobile home park resident, I see how rent increases affect our communities daily. The current rent increase cap is far too high to adequately protect the more than 62,000 households who live in Oregon's mobile home parks. Almost 7% of Oregonians live in manufactured homes, and here in Jackson County it's almost 14%. As you know, most homes in mobile home parks are owner occupied. We rent the land.

In one sense, we're a little better off than the average renter because we do own a home. However, our financial circumstances are perilous. A large majority of us are senior citizens. Many of us live on social security and have very low, fixed incomes. We have a lot of residents with significant disabilities. Others are working families with children. Some of us are hard working families of color, including Latino families here in Southern Oregon.

These are low-income families who have worked hard, who are working hard, and are barely getting by. Although we mostly own our homes, many are older models that require a lot of repairs and maintenance. We pay personal property taxes and buy insurance, so our housing costs are higher than just the space rent.

Looking at the big picture, it's a raw deal. We are a captive, stable rental market. That's why mobile home parks are "cash cows", and why investors are buying up our communities. Our homes cannot be moved and we live in these homes for decades. Some of us live in homes left to us by parents and grandparents. Our landlords can pretty much count on our rent! We've lived with that reality for decades with steadily increasing prices.

But now with inflation so high, it's simply cruel to allow these park owners to levy such high rent increases. Why should land owners not have to bear any of the risk of inflation? Why should low-income renters have to pay that cost instead?

We urge you to help Oregon's mobile home park communities buy their land and control their own lives. It's a boost for affordable housing. It's a boost for senior citizens' safety and wellbeing. It's a boost to help poor folks build home ownership and a little bit of wealth. It's a boost to help mobile home parks become safer, cleaner and run with pride. It's a boost for basic human rights. The American dream is home ownership. In the meantime, passing Senate Bill 611B is an important step to prevent more high rent homelessness. Thank you for supporting this measure!