

February 28, 2023

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee:

My name is Carol Link and I am an 86-year-old senior retiree residing in Eugene. I strongly urge passage of SB 611, which addresses the critical need for rental stability including limiting the amount of rent increase to 3% plus CPI per year or a total of 8% whichever is less here in Oregon.

The reality of the affordable housing emergency grabbed my attention when the new out-of-state owners of my retirement community, the Eugene Hotel Retirement Center, notified its senior residents that our rent had been increased to 14% in 2023. Historically, the former owners (local citizens of the Eugene community) had increased the rent an average of 3% per year. **That means that retired residents, about all of whom are on limited or fixed incomes, face an increase in rent from \$220 to \$330 per month, depending on the size of the apartment.** The sudden increase in rent is generally viewed by our residents as usurious and unsustainable in the future. If I face rent increases like the one this year in the future, I will have to look for more affordable housing elsewhere (if it exists)!

Since November, several senior residents have moved out; within the past week, four more seniors announced their departure by the end of this month. The prospect of an unstable future is increasingly becoming the "new norm" for retirees residing at the Eugene Hotel! Is that the "Oregon Way" to treat Senior Citizens?

The following is from my letter to the new Eugene Hotel ownership asking for reconsideration of the n 14% increase in rent for 2023 which I sent January 12, 2023:

To Whom it may Concern at DiNapoli Capital Partners, Walnut Creek, California:

"My name is Carol Link; I live in the Eugene Hotel. I am writing to address the rent increase issue. To avoid sounding like another old lady whining about this issue, I am presenting a brief employment and educational autobiography... not whining, just facts.

This led to I got my first job when I was 15 years old as a sales clerk at a local Sears's store. I worked after school and on weekends, often with two jobs and once with three, while staying on the honor roll at school. After two years of college, I became as clerk at an actuarial association and fortunately got an opportunity to be assigned to data processing. I married, had one child, divorced, and began life as a single mother, working all the time. In 1965, I returned to college and supported myself and my son with student jobs, as a teaching assistant, and with fellowships. Finally, I got an academic job. My salary was \$2.00 a month above the poverty line which meant I lost my food stamps and health care. Being tired of being poor, I returned to information technology where I stayed until downsizing retired me. I married again at age 59. For the first time in my life, I enjoyed a degree of financial security. I nursed my husband through his last days, eventually sold the house and moved to the Eugene Hotel to live happily ever after. In short, I paid my dues. I have never been reluctant to work hard to achieve my dreams and provide for my family.

For the past three years, life here at the Eugene Hotel has been good. The location, as you know, is great, but the building does have problems due to wear and tear over the years. The plumbing is touchy, the windows are drafty, and there is spotty air conditioning. My personal gripe is the kitchen sink, a bar sink where you and the counter top get a shower each time you use it."

Continued on the next page

"While I admit that the Eugene Hotel needs renovation, I do not agree that a 14% increase in the rent is called for. This will impact the financial position that many of us have worked and hard to achieve. Since all of us are older and many, if not most, are on a fixed income, finding a part time job and having the energy to perform it is unlikely. Furthermore, I am not at all sure that the funds you will receive from the Eugene Hotel will be used for the exclusive benefit of the Eugene Hotel. This is a sorrowful end to our efforts to participate in the American Dream! The cruellest blow is my shattered dream of a safe, secure, and comfortable retirement in a good location.

Other retirement facilities in the area charge a 6% increase in rent per year. These places are relatively new and have many features which the Eugene Hotel lacks. A 6% increase, exactly double the historic rate of increase of 3%, would be much easier for the current tenants to accept. Moreover, it would lead to two positive changes. One is cash to improve the maintenance of the building, provided that your corporation puts the money into an exclusive Eugene Hotel fund. The other is excellent relationships with the tenants, an intangible but priceless benefit to all of us."

Thus far, I have received no direct response from the new California-based owners. Their contracted regional manager located in Oregon spent three hours one day several weeks ago, talking to some residents. However, their silence leads me and most other residents, to believe that the owners' primary interest rests in maximizing their own profits, not providing quality service to their senior clients.

Landlords who seek such high increases in rent annually should not be allowed to invest in senior retirement communities where individuals on limited or fixed income have to carefully plan their long-term their long-term residency. Two or three years of 10+% annual increases in rent can take rental expenses far beyond an affordable range.

There is no denying that the lack of affordable and available housing and the abrupt and disproportionate financial burden placed on the low or fixed income, young adult and seniors, women, minorities and other at-need populations constitute an unfair price for unjust laws that destabilize too many lives.

I strongly urge you to pass SB 611 as quickly as possible. The sad truth is this: Either you support me now or you support me when I enter the welfare system. Thank you for your consideration and your public service.

Sincerely,

Carol Link