

Public testimony submission in support of Oregon State Senate's Senior Property Tax Freeze Bill March 24, 2025

I am writing in support of the Senate's Senior Property Tax Freeze Bill. Oregon's cost of living is generally higher than the national average which negatively impacts seniors on fixed incomes. Housing and healthcare costs in Oregon are higher than many other states. Property taxes are above the national average.

I know that Portland residents face some of the highest taxes in the nation on just about every class of income. I experience it myself on a daily basis. Once a magnet for newcomers, in 2024 Portland lost population for a third-straight year. Critics of tax policies undertaken by the city of Portland and by Multnomah County say that high levies are one of the reasons prompting people to leave. Those with higher incomes are moving away, many to Vancouver, WA, leaving those who can't afford to move to take on the tax burden of supporting local government. It's not a stretch to anticipate that fewer people paying taxes will result in increased taxation over time. The rising cost of utilities (especially water), food, medical and in-home care combined with higher property taxes and local taxes supporting the arts, schools, parks, libraries, schools, community colleges, to name a few, are forcing some seniors out of their neighborhoods and homes. Married seniors can find themselves single late in life, especially women, losing not only their spouses, but income their spouses may have provided. Support that was needed to meet living expenses. Many can no longer afford to absorb higher costs and stay in their houses. Those forced out of their homes discover that affordable rentals are few and far between.

Older people are now the fastest growing segment of the houseless population. According to the Point-In-Time Count (2023) one in four people in Oregon over the age of 55 are homeless. (Source: National Alliance to End Homelessness). The Senate's Senior Property Tax Freeze Bill doesn't excuse seniors from paying property taxes, it just levels the playing field for seniors on fixed incomes who are trying to navigate higher living costs. If legislators are concerned about the impact this bill would have on the state budget, one modification might be to raise the required age of eligibility to 67 or 70.

Please move this bill forward and let Oregon voters decide whether to support seniors by freezing their property taxes as they navigate the high cost of aging in America.

Thank you for your time.