



January 31, 2019

Chair Fagan and Members of the Senate Housing Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of Senate Bill 608. Unite Oregon asks for your strong support of SB 608 to provide Oregonians with basic renter protections and stabilize rents in a tight housing market.

Unite Oregon is led by people of color, immigrants and refugees, rural communities, and people experiencing poverty. We work across Oregon to build a unified intercultural movement for justice. We believe SB 608 is a part of the solution to our state's current housing crisis.

Today, 40% of Oregonians are renters, yet they can be evicted without cause at any moment or have a rent increase that leaves them displaced and in some instances, homeless. As a result of decades of discrimination, people of color living in Oregon are less likely to own their home and more likely to rent. In order to thrive, Oregonians of ALL backgrounds and abilities need a safe, stable place to call home.

The harm that is caused by no-cause evictions and sudden rent spikes affect our communities. Landlords and property managers will use no-cause evictions to discriminate against women with children, people of color and LGBTQ Oregonians. As a result, those same neighbors are the ones that are left with fewer housing options and are at a higher risk for experiencing homelessness. No-cause evictions and large rent increases magnify economic disparities for people of color and people with low incomes. Roughly 37 percent of people on the streets in Multnomah County are people of color, though they make up less than 29 percent of the county's population as a whole. By closing the glaring loopholes in Oregon's landlord tenant laws, we can keep families in their neighborhoods, parents in their jobs, and children in their schools.

Unite Oregon hopes you will join us in our collective efforts to improve racial equity in Oregon by supporting SB 608. SB 608 establishes a for-cause eviction standard that requires sufficient notice and a legitimate reason before a landlord can evict tenants who are paying rent on time and following the terms of their rental agreement. It will also provide rent stabilization protection, protecting tenants by outlining the percentage amount and the rate at which landlords may set rent increases, while also protecting a landlord's right to a earn fair rate of return on the property. These updates will protect fairness and stability for both tenants and landlords.

Kayse Jama
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