

From:
To: [Exhibits SHOUS](#)
Subject: Testimony on SB 608
Date: Monday, February 4, 2019 10:13:54 AM

Chair Fagan, members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony.

As a long time Portland tenant I have seen the impact of no cause evictions and large rent increases devastate my friends and community. I have been surprised by how reticent I have been to call out exploitation that my former landlords or property managers committed out of fear that they would use eviction or rent increases in retribution.

I am writing to state several positions. First, I am writing in support of SB 608. There are many problems with SB 608. It is not a rent stabilization, but rather an anti-price gouging bill. It does not ban no cause evictions, but rather lends some protections to some tenants in some situations. I hesitate to call this a tenant protection bill, but I think it would make things better than the status quo, which is why I write in support of SB 608.

I also write in opposition to the amendments proposed.

Amendment 1, would rescind the emergency portion of this bill. Since we are in a housing emergency, that seems dishonest. Also we have seen that not implementing such bills as emergencies leads to many evictions and rent increases for people who attempt to doge the legislation.

Amendment 2 extends the 15 year rent increase exemption to buildings that have had significant mechanical or structural improvements. The 15 year exemption already leaves many tenants unprotected. This would only expose more. Furthermore without a definition for "significant improvements", this condition would be unenforceable.

Amendment 3, by changing residential use to residential tenancy, open the door to more conversion that justify evictions, protecting fewer tenants.

Amendment 4 decreases the notification period for a tenant who is being evicted for a qualifying reason if the property is sold. However the 90 day period is crucial for tenants to find secure and affordable housing.

Amendment 5 would preempt Portland relocation assistance program and bar other jurisdictions from being able to implement such a program. One of the major flaws of this bill is that it does not lift the preemption on rent stabilization or no cause evictions, and continues to maintain that Oregon can better manage the housing market of the entire state rather than municipalities making choices for themselves. Creating more preemptions would be disastrous. I oppose all 5 amendments,

Considering the pace and process of this bill, I know other amendments are unlikely to advance. However I think it is important to mention the two greatest threats of this bill. The section on lease violation warnings (page 3 (7)) terribly weakens the protections for tenants on fixed term leases, and may encourage landlord harassment, including additional inspections, to evict tenants on frivolous grounds. Lease violation warnings can be given for violations like having too many potted plants, hanging a towel on the porch, or taking too long to mow the lawn. The other concern is around vacancy control (page 5 (6)). Vacancy control is very important for any type of rent stabilization or anti price gouging to work, but right now it is limited to no cause evictions. That incentivizes landlords who wish to price gouge to increase inspections to find excuses for a no cause eviction or to use the lease violation rule, or

otherwise use construction evictions or other harassment to get tenants to leave voluntarily. This is not speculation but he lived experience in other places that have imposed rent caps. Therefore vacancy control should be expanded.

There is much more work ahead to win true tenant protections but I thank you for your time and effort in advancing SB 608 without the proposed amendments to take the first half step forward.

-Leeor Schweitzer