

Dear Committee;

I am writing to you about the proposed legislation relating to change in Oregon landlord-tenant law.

I am a landlord, and I do not support SB 608 its current form. But what I have to say may surprise you.

I have been a landlord in Portland for 20 years. I have always thought of this as a business, and my tenants are my customers. I and my associates have always strived to treat our customers with thought and respect, and to honor the spirit and letter of the law. We're proud of the homes we offer, and the service we provide.

I do not have a philosophical objection to much of what is proposed. However, having experienced the city of Portland's attempts to regulate the industry, there are some pitfalls that I hope you can avoid. In general, the city's approach has encouraged adversarial relationships and expensive and adversarial resolutions. That has made me very sad. It has also meant that I've spent more time talking with lawyers in the last two years than in the entire 18 years before that. I would so much prefer to focus on providing great housing that doing that.

But more importantly, perhaps is that **being a landlord in Portland has gotten quite expensive, and risky. Our management costs have doubled**, both because of the complexity of the city ordinance (and how it interacts with state and federal law), and because the enforcement of the ordinance relies entirely on the legal system. That means that if we make one mistake in carrying out a complex procedure, we can end up with expenses of many thousands of dollars, mostly to attorneys and also to tenants.

So I want to urge you to consider writing legislation that recognizes that there are many landlords who are small and doing their best, but might make mistakes. And I want to encourage you to require, in the legislation, that disputes between landlords and tenants, that small violations of the law, first be handled in an administrative fashion that does not require attorneys.

Most of us want to do a good job. But right now, in Portland, we are raising rents more than we would have without the new city ordinance, because our management and legal costs have gone up so dramatically. There are literally new legal firms popping up in Portland to take advantage of this new income opportunity. That is coming from landlords, and thus, from increased rents.

So again, I urge you to craft legislation that

- greatly reduces the involvement of attorneys and courts in enforcement,
- does not encourage adversarial relationships between residents and owners,
- encourages collaborative resolutions of issues that come up between parties involved in rental housing,
- recognizes that small landlords can make simple procedural mistakes in implementing complex laws, and makes the violations commensurate with the situation,
- makes it clear how city ordinances interact with state law, or that state law supersedes city ordinances when they address the same issue.

i appreciate your work in the legislature.

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