

TO: Chair Shemia Fagan
RE: Oregon Senate Bill 608
Date: 04 February 2019

Chair Fagan, members of the committee,

Good afternoon. My name is LeeLa Coleman. I am a renter, a retired worker and I live in Portland.

Several years ago, a neighbor's barbecue fire got out of control, caught the deck on fire and I called 911. The fire department responded and quickly put out the fire. Property damage was minimal and I was thanked for acting quickly. Unfortunately, the property manager was not happy and verbally reprimanded me for having called 911.

The next day, I was given a no-cause eviction and told that prospective landlords would be given a "do not rent" reference. I was devastated, but immediately started making plans to move. I thought my decades of excellent rental history and good credit would make the process smooth.

That is when I ran headlong into Oregon's unjust rental laws. I quickly found that:

- There are few affordable rental units;
- That I needed \$3,000 - \$4,000 cash for moving expenses;
- And, most crucially, that landlords immediately reject applications with bad references.

I consulted 3 experienced landlord attorneys, they all told me the same thing – in Oregon, no-cause evictions give landlords the freedom retaliate or discriminate and that I had no recourse to fight the eviction.

It quickly became clear that my housing options were extremely limited: I could spend my entire income and live in a hotel room – and move every thirty days. Or I could purchase a travel trailer and hope for the best.

I was desperate and wrote a letter to the property owner and asked for reconsideration. She, and a new manager, responded in a very ethical manner. They conducted a just cause investigation and determined that there was no cause to force me to move.

I am very fortunate to have a stable income and good credit. But a property manager's bad mood almost erased everything. Without protections, Oregon renters have no recourse to fight against homelessness and poverty related to housing. This is an injustice.

This is a tragedy. Stable renters build safe and healthy neighborhoods. With 40% of Oregonians renting, we are part of the foundation of strong and healthy neighborhoods. I ask that you pass legislation to protect tenants against unscrupulous landlords, and pass SB608 out of committee.

Respectfully submitted,

LeeLa Coleman
Portland Oregon