



HOUSING ALLIANCE

February 18, 2019

House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chair Noble, Vice Chair Sanchez, and members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our strong support of SB 608, which will provide basic and essential protections for people who rent their homes.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including non-profit housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Today, we simply don't have enough affordable homes for people who need them, and vacancy rates have dropped precipitously towards zero in communities across Oregon. People – our neighbors and members of our community – are struggling with homelessness, housing instability, rent burdens, and to make ends meet and put food on the table. During the last school year, over 22,000 of our school children in grades K – 12 experienced homelessness at some point during the year.

Today, across our state, families, individuals, seniors, and people with disabilities are being negatively impacted by the lack of basic protections for people who rent their homes. Our laws allow renters to be evicted without a cause, for no reason, with as little as thirty days' notice. Our laws allow renters to receive an unlimited rent increase with only ninety days' notice. These laws allow and contribute to extreme instability, displacement, and negative effects for our communities.

Increasing rents mean that too many families are experiencing what housing experts call "severe rent burden", meaning they are spending significant portions of their income towards rent. The standard is that housing should cost approximately 30 percent of your income, leaving you enough money left over to buy food, transportation, child care, utilities, and other necessities. When families spend more than a third of their income on rent, it means they have too little left over for other basics, and have to make tough choices between paying rent and putting food on the table. It also means that an emergency – a car repair bill, a medical emergency – can push families into homelessness.

The lack of stable housing is also impacting our schools, our classrooms, and our teachers. Last year, the Oregonian's series called "Reading, Writing, Evicted" shared that in some classrooms, half of the class is new at

the end of the year because of housing instability and moves out of the district¹. This instability significantly and negatively impacts both the children who are moving from class to class, as well as their peers.

SB 608 will help provide basic stability for people across our state. SB 608 will:

- Prohibit the use of no cause evictions after the first 12-months of occupancy.
- Create a category of new landlord-based business reasons that a landlord can terminate a tenancy. These reasons include: moving in or moving an immediate family member into the unit; significant repair that means the rental unit will be unfit or unsafe for occupancy; selling the unit to someone who will live in the home; or removing it from residential use. If a landlord uses one of these new landlord-based reasons to terminate a tenancy, they must give the tenant 90 days' notice and if the landlord owns 5 or more units, they must pay the tenant 1-months' rent in relocation expenses. In addition, the bill makes no changes to existing for cause (tenant fault) reasons to evict.
- The bill also sets an annual limit on rent increases to no more than 7 percent plus the consumer price index. New construction is exempt for a period of 15-years after certificate of occupancy, and a landlord may raise the rent without limit at the beginning of a new tenancy, provided they did not use a no-cause notice during the first twelve months of the tenancy.
- This legislation also does not apply to providers of subsidized affordable housing whose properties and rent are already regulated by state and federal contracts. These providers already operate within a strict framework of rent regulation.

Passing SB 608 will mean that across our state, people who rent their homes will have access to stability, predictability, and basic protections. The policies in SB 608 will ensure that:

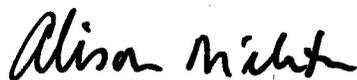
- For people who have been renting their home longer than twelve months, they will have the ability to plan ahead and will no longer fear an eviction without a cause. In the last year, we heard several stories about long-term tenants who received no-cause evictions.
- Rent increases will have a maximum amount, seven percent plus the consumer price index, which will prevent the extreme rent increases which cannot be absorbed into the household budget. Over the last three years, we hear regularly from renters whose rent has increased significantly – between twenty and one hundred percent rent increases.

We know what home, and what stable housing, means to all of us. When people have safe and stable housing, it has important and significant benefits, and allows people to build for their futures. Kids are able to focus on the things that matter – being kids, doing their homework – instead of worrying about where their families will sleep at night. Parents are able to focus on work, on family, and on community. Safe and stable housing that people can afford is key to accessing opportunity.

We urge you to support SB 608.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

¹“Reading, Writing, Evicted”, The Oregonian, February 2018
https://www.oregonlive.com/education/index.ssf/page/reading_writing_evicted.html

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Chrisman Development
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Creswell
City of Eugene
City of Forest Grove
City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
Common Ground OR-WA
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enhabit
Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Impact Northwest
Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Looking Glass Community Services
Mainstream Housing, Inc
Metro
Mid Columbia Housing Authority
Native American Youth and Family Center
(NAYA)
Neighborhood Economic Development Corp.
(NEDCO)
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Center for Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Housing Authorities
Oregon Law Center
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Portland Housing Center
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Rogue Action Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Transition Projects
Turning Point
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition
Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services