

Kate Brown
Governor



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Oregon House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Public Hearing, State Capitol, HR 50

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

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Senate Bill 608 (SB 608), that provides renters with renter rights including preventing no-cause evictions and excessive rent increases. We, the members of the Oregon Advocacy Commissions (OACs), believe that the revised bill will protect our constituents from unfair housing practices and reduce the number of residents facing homeless and houseless due to no-cause evictions and excessive rent increase. The OACs have existed for 30 years, created under the administrations of three governors. The commissioners are a governor and legislatively appointed group that brings an underrepresented and independent voice to the policy table of the 30+ distinct ethnic and cultural groups that comprise communities in rural and urban areas statewide.

Communities of color and low income families, often headed by working women, face disproportionate impacts of current practices in an industry that has become driven by investment for the wealthy without due consideration of the housing it represents for every Oregonian. Skyrocketing rent costs, evictions, and the rapidly increasing number of homeless families with children show how current policies are playing out in every Oregon area. Statistically, housing instability is one of the most pernicious threats to wellbeing for Oregonians and has held this distinction for a number of years. The legislature and community leaders have called for definitive action since 2017, but access to affordable and safe housing remains out of reach. We must come to terms with the understanding that without guidance and fair legislative requirements of what has become an investment industry, no-cause evictions and excessive rent increases will continue on its current path, disrupting lives and damaging communities and separating families. According to a recent article in the Oregon Center for Public Policy, "half of all renters in Oregon spend more than 30 percent of their income on rent and utilities." Low-income families are the hardest hit.

We believe everyone needs a safe and stable place to call home: a concept being lost in the unregulated pursuit of wealth. Our communities are depending on the legislature to act to provide basic protections and stability to tenants as they raise families, save for education and look forward to becoming homeowners themselves in time. While there are many issues related to solving the housing problems Oregonians are facing, it is essential that Oregon leaders pass the types of reliable, statewide protections that SB 608 provides. There is room for both wealth generation and housing stability in Oregon and we consider it achievable with the help of the balance written into this bill.

Thank you for your positive consideration and opportunity to share our views on a crisis affecting so many in our communities, and often disproportionately.

Sincerely,

Chanpone Sinlapasai-Okamura,
Chair, OCAPIA

Dr. Barbara Spencer
Chair, OCFW

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Pacific Islander Affairs**

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