

Stable Housing Testimony – 2019
Good Afternoon,

My name is Paula Peña. I am a SEIU member, and have been for nearly 14 years. I am also a former Teamster and United Grocers union member.

This is about two hardworking people who have worked all their lives. They are now senior citizens and on a fixed income. Their names - Reyes and Irma. My Daddy and my Momma.

My Daddy will be 64 years young this March and my Momma just turned 62 years young. About 2 years ago, my dad began the process of early retirement due to his health. He is partially retired (he now works seasonal instead of full-time) and currently collects his union pension from Teamsters and SSI. His total individual income a month is about \$1500. My Momma had to retire early, as she is my dad's main caretaker followed by my sister, Angelica and myself. With Teamsters, SEIU and SSI income, my mom's individual income is \$1200 a month. This income includes \$450 dollars that I give my parents for watching my youngest child, who is 2 years old (unfortunately, I cannot afford daycare). That is a combined total income of about \$2750 a month.

At about the same time my dad began his process for retirement, my parents received their first of **five** rent increases. Their rent 18 months ago was \$500 a month plus paying full utilities. Beginning May 1, 2019, my parent's **FIFTH** rental hike will take effect. Their rent will now be \$975.00 a month, and still pay **FULL** Utilities. They pay water, sewage, garbage, electric their medications and phone. I still have not gotten to food or auto insurance payments yet. My dad has heart medication that costs over \$1000 for a 30-day supply. We are blessed with the fact that he has Medicare, Medicaid and his employer's is still covering his health insurance, and has a \$4 co-pay for his meds. My parents qualify for state assistance and have had to rely on the local community food pantry, participate in Salem Harvest Foods, even though my sister and I help our parents out with groceries and any other things that they may need.

In 18 months, my parents have had nearly a 100% rent increase! It does NOT matter what spectrum of the political realm one is on, what is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. My husband and I are looking at ways we can help my parents more. If this means me sneaking additional money into my dad's wallet when he's not looking, finding a way to afford a house that has six bedrooms or a property that includes mother-in-law cottage for my parents and a home for my small family of 7, or selling tamales in a parking lot I will do it to make sure my parents are not going without. My dad is a very proud man, and having to depend on his two daughters who have their own families to help financially is not what he and my momma had envisioned when they hit retirement age. Nor did they anticipate having to retire early because of health issues.