

Statement of

Amber Monte, Owner of Country Estates in Grants Pass & Columbus Greens in Albany

February 17, 2014

Senate Committee on General Government, Consumer & Small Business Protection

Chairman Shields and Members of the Committee:

My name is Amber Monte. I am an Oregon mobile home park owner with parks in Grants Pass and Albany. I also manage a number of mobile home parks in Oregon, including in the cities of Keizer, Grants Pass, White City, Medford, Fairview, Eugene and Salem to name a few. As I am sure many of you would agree, I believe mobile home parks are the very best source of non-subsidized affordable housing in the state.

Mobile home parks provide tens of thousands of families and seniors with an incredible source of housing and I believe it is very important that we do everything in our power to preserve it. I know each of you feel the same way. I also know that you've all received quite a bit of pressure to pass this bill and before you do that, I am here to ask for your help to fix its problems.

I was a member of the work group assigned to study the current law and I attended every meeting eager to explore this issue. It is with great embarrassment that I sit here in front of you today knowing the poorly written product that has been presented to you for quick and thoughtless passage. Not only does it not solve any of the current problems, it is so defectively and hastily written that I am confident it will cause tremendous damage to the mobile home park industry in the state of Oregon, including fueling park closures.

The goal of the workgroup was to create a bill that would provide tenants with a better opportunity to purchase than what they currently have while also being a fair compromise for park owners. This simply did not happen. Instead what you have is a bill that was written by two attorneys who stand to financially gain from the confusion and problems it will undoubtedly create.

As you know, this bill was co-wrote by two industry attorneys, Phil Querin and John VanLandingham. Neither of which are mobile home parks owners nor are they mobile home park tenants. They are, however, industry attorneys who know that both tenants and park owners will need legal guidance if this bill is enacted in its current state. I was horrified when they hijacked the workgroup and wrote this bill together without any input from me or any of the other park owners in the work group. I have spent a tremendous amount of time to try to amend this bill in a way that CAN be workable and they have flatly refused to make those much needed amendments. I'm here today to ask for your assistance in creating a good bill and one that will not only benefit the tenants but also not push much needed resources and investment out of the state of Oregon.

I am well aware that some park owners have a bad reputation but the truth is that most of us invest countless time, money and expertise in local low-income housing for many Oregonians. In just the City of Salem alone, I have installed brand new water lines costing well over \$100,000 in two parks that are within walking distance from where we sit today. I am also developing 50 additional mobile home sites just down the street from here in a park called Copper Creek Estates where I regularly sell homes below my cost to families who need safe and affordable housing. I invite you to visit any of my properties to see all of the good work that park owners are doing in the state of Oregon.

Unfortunately many special interest groups lead you to believe the tenants need to be saved from park owners, when during all of these hearings I haven't heard from a single tenant who wanted to buy their park but not wasn't able to. Currently tenants are free to make an offer to buy their park at any moment. If tenants can make any offer any time, why are CASA and John VanLandingham so eager to see this bill passed? Simple - because it benefits them. Not park tenants.

I know that you want to help the tenants achieve park ownership, but this bill frankly does not work. While I believe it needs MANY improvements, at the very least, I would like to ask you to make two specific amendments that make sense for everyone. The first would be to mandate the creation of only one tenant committee to handle negotiations. Otherwise, there may be multiple tenant groups formed to simultaneously make offers and negotiate a park purchase, which will cause a lot of confusion and frustration for all parties. The second amendment would be to allow LLCs the same exemption as this bill allows partnerships. OPOA has submitted evidence to you to show that LLCs are a far more prevalent form of ownership today than partnerships and I can attest to this on a personal level.

Unfortunately with as many problems as this bill has, it was hard to narrow down the suggested amendments to only two. I hope that you will give this bill thoughtful consideration before charging ahead in an experiment that will surely have extraordinarily negative implications for the Oregonian seniors and families who need protection from this wolf in sheep's clothing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.