

Chair Gelser, members of the committee,

My name is LeeLa Coleman. I am a renter and I live in Portland.

Last August, 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 reprimanded me for having called 911.

The next day, I was given a no-cause eviction and told prospective landlords would be given a "do not rent" reference. Although devastating, I immediately started making plans to move. That is when I ran headlong into the buzzsaw of Oregon's rental situation. I quickly found that:

- There are very few vacant rental units in Portland that I could afford;
- That I needed \$3,000 - \$4,000 cash for moving expenses;
- And, that landlords immediately reject applications with bad references.

My decades of excellent rental history were meaningless. I consulted with 3 experienced landlord attorneys to determine if I could fight my eviction based on retaliation. They all told me the same thing – in Oregon, no-cause evictions give landlords the freedom to retaliate or discriminate. There is absolutely no recourse for the renter as long as the landlord hides behind no-cause, no-reason evictions.

My life flashed before my eyes. I'm 62 years old with retirement on the horizon. It quickly became clear that my options were to spend my entire income and live in a hotel room, buy a travel trailer and move every 30 days or quit my job and move out of the area with the hope of finding employment and affordable housing. The options would be financially devastating to me this close to retirement.

In desperation, I wrote a letter to the property owner and asked for reconsideration. She, and a new manager, responded in a very ethical manner and conducted an investigation. They determined that there was no cause to evict me and offered me a 6 month probationary lease.

But, I'm not out of the woods. My rental probation is nearly up and any day I will learn my fate. The stress of having my life's foundation knocked out from under me has taken its toll. My younger brother has been homeless for 6 years and I could easily be joining him on in the streets.

I am fortunate to have a living wage job, good credit and an excellent rental history. But a property manager's bad mood almost erased everything I have built. With our current lack of protections, I have no recourse and no ability to fight back against this injustice.

This is a tragedy. Stable renters build safe and healthy neighborhoods. With 25% of Oregonians renting, we are part of the foundation of neighborhoods. I ask that you pass legislation to protect tenants against unscrupulous land lords, and pass HB 2004 out of committee.