

Oregon Center for Christian Voices

info@occv.org

Testimony on HB2004A to
Senate Committee on Human Services, May 2, 2017

Chair Gelser, Vice Chair Olsen, members of the Senate Committee on Human Services;

My name is Karen Nettler, I am on the board of Oregon Center for Christian Voices (OCCV), a faith-based organization advocating for laws and policies that reflect the scriptural mandate for a government structure fostering the well-being of all, and particularly those most at risk. I am representing OCCV and the Housing Alliance in writing in support of HB2004A.

Early in the legislative session, I listened to several hours of testimony at the House hearings on HB2004, heard the testimonies of renters who are increasingly at risk of losing housing because they are unable to afford rent, of people who are homeless because their limited incomes aren't enough to pay for all their basic needs, of people who have been good tenants who are suddenly faced with evictions for no fault of their own and with a rental market beyond their means. I also heard legitimate concerns from landlords and housing developers, and as HB2004 moved through the House, reasonable amendments were added to address the concerns of both landlords and renters. OCCV continues to support this revised bill.

The bill declares the lack of affordable housing as an emergency. And, while the bill will require some adjustments for landlords and housing developers, they will by no means experience an emergency. It is an emergency when hard-working people simply cannot afford stable housing to provide a secure place for their families. It is an emergency when families experience the stress of frequent moves, with no assurance that the next move will bring them the security they need to thrive. It is an emergency when children are changing schools sometimes several times a year, due to insecure housing. It is an emergency that can have life-long effects for families, and especially children, who have experienced the trauma of not having a safe and secure place to call home.

In his book, Evicted, Matthew Desmond says: "...without stable shelter, everything else falls apart." Safe and affordable housing is a fundamental need, without which the health, safety and security of families is profoundly at risk. And a society that allows a lack of affordable housing is a society at risk. The prophetic teachings in the Hebrew scriptures insist on systems that assure every person and family has access to the resources that allow them to live in dignity and safety. Whatever our faith, or none, we must not stand by and watch while everything falls apart for families without stable shelter. OCCV respectfully urges this committee to come alongside those families by supporting HB2004A.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Nettler, OCCV board chair
11816 SE Solomon Court
Happy Valley 97086