

House Bill 2004
Senate Committee on Human Services

May 3, 2017

Dear Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Olsen, and members of the Committee,

My name is Marti Heard, and I am the McKinney-Vento Homeless Program Liaison at Portland Public Schools. I am writing **in support** of House Bill 2004 to limit no-cause evictions and allow local jurisdictions to implement rent stabilization. These policies would help the children we serve by helping their families maintain stable housing. A stable, safe home is the foundation for a child's success in education. It provides for their physical, emotional, and mental health.

As homeless student liaisons, we work with children and families experiencing homelessness to provide for their basic needs. Key services we provide include educational support, transportation to a child's home school, and connecting them with resources such as food assistance, clothing, and health care. We are unable to solve the underlying problem: a lack of affordable housing. Our referrals to housing service providers often result in dead ends, as funds for emergency housing assistance are scarce and the waitlists for affordable housing are lengthy.

Today, an increasing number of children are facing severe housing instability and homelessness—and more of these episodes are due to no-cause evictions and extreme rent increases. In the past, many episodes of homelessness resulted from the loss of income or other unexpected financial hardships, meaning they could no longer pay rent. The landscape has changed and many more working families with stable—if modest—incomes are forced to leave their homes due to no-cause evictions, or economically displaced due to rent increases.

As rents have increased and vacancy rates drop, families who are able to find housing may be forced to move far away from their schools or out of the district entirely. Children's lives are deeply disrupted by homelessness. Once students are established in a school and have built relationships with teachers and classmates, a move can be traumatic, especially during the school year. We do everything possible to try to keep displaced students in their original schools, but sometimes it just isn't possible. Research has shown that moves result in about three months' loss of educational time and other academic challenges. Students who are immigrants struggle as they are uprooted from their support network and community; the education of students with disabilities may be set back when they transfer to another school. When these students experience homelessness, these challenges are even greater. The stress from a forced move or homelessness can create deep trauma in children.

Every family deserves a safe and stable home, and every child deserves educational opportunity. No child should have to wonder where they are going to sleep tonight, or have

no quiet place to do their homework. We can help prevent this trauma from happening to our children by limiting no-cause evictions and allowing local governments to enact rent stabilization, so children can stay in their schools and homes. Please support the tenant protections in House Bill 2004 so children have a safe, stable place to call home.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Marti Heard
McKinney-Vento Homeless Program Liaison
Portland Public Schools