

Dear Legislators,

I am writing in regards to HB 2004-A. I think everyone agrees there is a housing shortage and in particular, low income housing is a major concern. With that said, this bill does not address the lack of housing, Instead it's focused on restricting property owners. Of particular concern is the removal of the no-cause notice of termination. If the no-cause notice is removed, an owner will no longer be able to terminate a tenancy, but would be forced to evict a tenant or be penalized for relocating a tenant. When it comes to the use of no-cause notices, I can honestly tell you there are times when it is the best tool available in order to safeguard another tenant.

Several years ago, I rented a small apartment to a newlywed couple. It wasn't long before I began getting calls from some of the neighbors. They reported screaming and crying coming from the apartment of this couple. Eventually, they began calling the police who would respond to find a woman who would barely open the door and tell them all was fine. As soon as they would leave, the screaming and crying would start up again.

Then things quieted down for awhile until one day when I got a call notifying me that a tent was found in the woods near the complex. The tent belonged to the husband of this woman and it was thought that he may have been taking her there to abuse, in a location where no one could hear her screams.

The complaints I received were from neighbors who feared this man, and when it was confirmed that he had placed the tent and subsequently was trespassed from that property, he became more and more angry and the complaints once again grew. The neighbors did not want him to know they had complained, as they became more fearful of him, so they expected me to resolve the problem and remove the tenants from the property.

Since the wife refused to file against her husband and denied he abused her, and the neighbors would not testify, this left me with just one way to solve the problem and that was with a no-cause notice to terminate. Once I issued the notice, the husband turned his anger on me. So one morning, through the front office door came a man, furious that I had issued him a notice terminating his tenancy. He threatened me and as a female, I must admit, it scared me. My boss, who is a man, stepped up between me and the tenant and removed him from our office. I then spent the next 30 days on alert but had I had to file a formal eviction, I would have feared for my life.

Fortunately in this case, the no-cause notice was the best tool to use, as it meant no formal eviction and subsequent record for the wife. Her family intervened and helped her to find other housing and the strength to end a violent relationship. To this day I am thankful that she did not have to be put through the court process. In fact several months after her family helped her to move out, I ran into her. At first, I felt a lump in my throat, thinking she would hate me for taking away her housing. Instead, she told me how thankful she was and that from this action she was able to break away, to get a new life started, and even a job. She was an entirely different person. What might have happened otherwise? Since the husband took out his anger on his wife, would the formal eviction have been the final straw? Might his anger have been so great she wouldn't survive the next beating? Fortunately, we will never know as this was a happy ending by use of a tool that also provided a happy ending for the neighbors and protected their right to peaceful enjoyment.

As a side note to this story, the complex where this occurred has become a condominium complex and thus had an owners association, which had a fine process for the owners if their tenants violated the rules. As a result, the owner of the unit was also fined.

I ask you to please oppose this bill. I realize how difficult your task at hand is, but sadly this bill will only further reduce the housing supply, increase rents and security deposits and tighten screening criteria, thus eliminating many potential renters from qualifying for any housing. Penalizing property owners by taking away their ability to make decisions on their property by requiring them to renew leases with substantially the same terms is causing a lot of landlords to opt out of renting their homes altogether. I do believe no matter what side of the issue one takes with this bill, we can all agree that a solution centered on the supply of housing is necessary. I respectfully request therefore, you consider the negative impact this legislation will create and find a solution that will benefit tenants, landlords and neighbors. Please vote NO on HB 2004-A.

Most respectfully,

Arleigh Santoro
Property Manager
President Central Oregon ROA