



February 4, 2019

Chair Fagan and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on Senate Bill 608.

Today marks Civil Rights leader Rosa Parks' Birthday. In celebration of her work, we at OPAL celebrate by participating in Transit Equity Day, a national holiday uplifting public transportation as an equitable climate change solution. As Rosa Parks once said, "You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right." We believe that providing a foundation to families and communities with housing that is stable, safe and affordable is the right thing and we must act now!

OPAL is a membership-driven organization working to build power and leadership of those most-impacted by environmental justice issues like housing. Environmental Justice (EJ) addresses how people experience their environment: the places where we live, work, learn, practice spirituality and play. The question of who gets to live where, and why, is rooted in economic, social and racial justice.

OPAL supports this legislation because SB 608 provides some relief to the 40% of Oregonians who rent their home by stabilizing their rents and ending no cause evictions. The bill addresses a statewide crisis with a statewide solution.

Just Cause eviction standards are a low-cost policy tool for preventing displacement. The tool meets a number of important goals and has broader implications, not least among them being protecting tenants from unjust evictions. These protections preserve social and economic diversity, provide tenants with stable and affordable rents, and keep communities together. Housing stability creates better lifetime outcomes for families, neighborhoods, and the state. Long-term housing stability should be a goal for this committee. At its core, Just Cause eviction protections require landlords to provide a "just" or "good cause" reasoning prior to evicting tenants. This still leaves vulnerable communities in month-to-month and fixed-term tenancies at risk of no-cause evictions. We encourage legislators to consider requiring 90 days notice, instead of 30 indicated in the current version of the bill.

Oregonians, especially those who are low income, face multiple challenges in finding stable, safe and affordable housing. Housing costs are the greatest expense in household budgets, thus limiting the ability of low-income individuals to meet other vital needs, such as food, utilities, and health-related expenses. We believe the seven percent plus consumer price index limitation on price gouging is still too high for the communities we organize and represent. When families lose their homes due to skyrocketing rents, they often have little time to come up with the sometimes thousands of dollars required to move to a stable place. Finding an affordable home on short notice often means moving away from schools, daycares, support networks, places of



OPAL

Environmental Justice Oregon

opalpdx.org

3202 SE 82nd Ave, Suite B, Portland, OR 97266 | 503-774-4503

employment, places of worship, and community centers. Seniors, people with disabilities, and people with health issues are particularly at risk when they lose access to their care providers and communities.

Secure housing is a human right, but in Oregon this right is denied to too many. SB 608 begins to provide relief to Oregon's renters by requiring landlords to meet basic standards that prevent exploitation of the basic human need for shelter. In short, passage of SB 608 is the right thing to do. Please help our communities be secure in their rights, and strengthen and advance this legislation.

Sincerely

Maria Hernandez
Policy and Advocacy Manager
OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon