Submitter: Cassandra Barrientos

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3503

Dear Committee Members,

My name is Cassandra Barrientos and I am a tenant living in Eugene. I am writing today to urge you to support House Bill 3503 and I want to share my story a bit to tell you why local jurisdictions should be able to make rules that suit their communities.

Our apartments are new. They wrapped up in late 2019 and we moved in mid-2020. It was marketed to us as a local company-run complex with some move-in bonuses. They tried to bait and switch us after we'd already agreed on the apartment we toured--we considered ourselves "lucky" that we found one that they had left that we liked after that, or we might not have moved in the first place. Ah, if only we'd known!

Our rent has gone up over $600 in these last 3 years, even though we've been good and respectful tenants who've never missed a rent payment or fallen behind on utilities. We indicated from the start that we'd like to stay a while and make it into a home. We have taken care of it in return--back in the day, that was normal enough for a landlord to have the incentive to keep tenants, maybe raise the rent a bit less a year, be receptive to improvement suggestions for the longevity of the complex, etc. But that doesn't happen anymore because the greedy ones know the housing scarcity can let them treat tenants as disposable. Because we are to them. And the owners of our apartment have shown us that.

Our car and others have been broken into on multiple occasions because management refuses to give assigned parking and does not reinforce the lot laws in our leases, which forces tenants to park in the street when the lot is full. This is worse on weekends because the landlady takes those days off...whilst living on-site. If we have a problem on the weekends--even though everyone knows which home is theirs--we're left to wait until they return our calls during the week to handle it. One of those services is the tow truck to remove derelict vehicles, so if there's a junker parked in front of your apartment you have to handle it until further notice.

Management is uncompromising at best and hostile at worst. On top of all this, the actual owners of the property are located in Portland; I've only ever seen a Portland representative once, and that was because our apartments were being inspected by potential investors. Not the owners, just an investor.

Urgent repair requests have taken days and sometimes weeks rather than hours to be looked at. One of the best examples was when a wild blackberry bush kept

creeping up and over the fence at the base of our apartment. This sounds like no big deal, but a 2 story blackberry bush is home to mice, rats, birds, bugs, and more. There were creatures making their way through the fence, up and over onto our balcony. Bugs decimated my flowers, critters stole the fruits of my garden labors, and birds took dives at our cats when we would let them into the balcony with us. The downstairs apartment had it even worse and made complaints that were ignored. When we went down to reinforce their requests for landscaping maintenance, we were told the blackberry was on The City of Eugene's side, and if we wanted to do anything about it we should contact the city. Our requests continued to be ignored until last year when we went above their head and contacted the Portland office directly, and even then it took several more weeks to get it (begrudgingly) solved.

Half the reason we haven't left is that even with the yearly rent increases we're one of the few remaining original tenants, so our rent is still lower, though not by much. Our renewal month is a common bad time of year for the housing market, and if we were to go month to month instead to try and find a place? Apartments that do that here always get served with a 90 day eviction notice so that the apartment can be flipped and sold at a higher price.

There's no winning here. There's no thriving here, only surviving. Please support HB 3503