



June 21, 2023

Representative Julie Fahey
Chair, House Committee On Rules
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for SB 611B

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

I write on behalf of Home Forward in strong support of Senate Bill 611B. If adopted, this bill would provide much needed protections for housing stabilization and homelessness prevention for renters across our state.

Home Forward is a Public Housing Authority (PHA) and the largest provider of affordable housing in the state of Oregon. We serve more than 15,500 Multnomah County low-income households by providing affordable housing, administering rent assistance, and providing supportive services. Our mission is to assure that the people of our community are sheltered. We own and manage over 6,500 homes throughout Multnomah County. We also provide households with services which range from youth support to health and wellness. Meanwhile, we fund rent assistance for thousands of households residing in private unregulated housing that we do not directly oversee. We administer emergency rent assistance programs that benefit landlords and tenants alike, including Short Term Rent Assistance, the Landlord Compensation Fund, and the Landlord Guarantee Fund.

Senate Bill 611B provides reasonable and necessary rent stabilization for tenants, while protecting landlords' and developers' ability to maintain a reasonable profit. This bill revisits the critical protections against excessive rent gouging adopted by lawmakers in 2019 with the passage of SB 608 in 2019. Back in 2019, we did not anticipate the extreme inflation we are seeing today that is resulting in permissible rent increases of 14.6%. SB 611B simply puts a reasonable cap on rent increases in the circumstances of future extreme inflation without impacting the existing exemptions outlined in SB 608. Without SB 611B, tens of thousands of renters are at risk of displacement due to extreme rent burdening.

At Home Forward we have seen firsthand how exorbitant rent increases force the families we serve to lose their housing and face homelessness, even with ongoing rent assistance such as a Housing Choice Voucher. If a family receiving monthly rent assistance cannot remain stably housed after such a rent increase, imagine the impact on the thousands of low-income to moderate income families without such assistance. We do not have to imagine because studies have shown that a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. Our current law is allowing extreme rent spikes and the results are playing out in eviction court. Between October and March of this past year, the average was more than 2,000 eviction filings a month, and approximately 86% of all filings were due to unaffordable rent.

At a time when Oregon is experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation, we cannot afford to let rent spikes go unchecked.

Home Forward urges the passage of SB 611B as soon as possible. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact Christina Dirks, Director of Policy and Planning at (503) 348-1196 or christina.dirks@homeforward.org regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Christina Dirks". It is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Christina Dirks
Director of Policy and Planning
Home Forward