



## Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

March 26, 2023

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of Senate Bill 611, which will protect seniors, families, individuals and communities across the state from extreme rent increases and displacement.**

My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am testifying on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 87,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

We believe that every Oregonian should be able to afford rent and have access to a place they call home without having to put in jeopardy their ability to pay for food, child care, transportation, health care, taxes, and other necessities. Unfortunately, Oregon has seen a 14.6% rent increase and there have been more than 2,000 eviction filings every month since the expiration of protections, which is a 43% increase over pre-pandemic levels. These rent increases have negatively impacted the homes and lives of our members; many of whom are low-income frontline workers.

SB 611 is an action that the legislature can take now to have an immediate impact on our state's housing crisis as we also work on the longer term solutions of increasing supply and providing support to rehouse our currently homeless neighbors. SB 611 would do the following three things:

1. **Limits rent increases to 3% + inflation with maximum increase of 8% during a calendar year.** Currently, rent increases for properties 15 or more years old can be as high as 14.6% outpacing both wages and Social Security. This increase is too high for working people like my members.
2. **Applies rent stabilization to buildings older than 3 years.** Currently, there are no limits at all on rent increases in buildings 15 years or newer. Reports of extreme increases such as 32%, 47%, and 50% are becoming more common. This would increase the number of people protected while exempting new construction.
3. **Increase relocation assistance to three-months' rent to help tenants displaced through no fault of their own avoid homelessness.** Landlords with four units or less are exempt from this provision. Current relocation assistance is one-month's rent, which is not enough considering how difficult it is to find a new home in Oregon's tight and expensive rental market.



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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. Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. A reasonable rent limit will help prevent high-rent home loss and prevent our state's homeless crisis from getting worse just as we are all pulling together to treat it as the emergency that it is.

SEIU Oregon strongly urges the Committee to stand in unity with our members and support SB 611.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos  
Political and Government Relations Organizer  
SEIU Oregon State Council