

Submitter: Lea Belton
On Behalf Of: Myself and my fellow renters and housing work group
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or SB722
Topic:

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

I am again writing in strong support of SB 722, which will ban price-fixing software that inflates rent prices.

My fellow renters and I know that the rising eviction rates are largely caused by rent being way too high and rising. I'm sure others who have given testimony on this have shared many facts and figures about how this is the cause of the housing crisis. It is.

The simple solution is to listen to renters, look at the eviction rate and who is being evicted - working class families. Please do the following:

1. Analyze who benefits from artificially inflated rent prices and vacancy numbers that are essentially faked in order to raise rent prices even more.
2. Ponder what landlords who oppose SB 722 have to benefit from crying crocodile tears about legal costs that MAY result from them having used this software that artificially inflated rents. They testify that the legal costs they will suffer due to SB 722 are costs they will simply pass onto renters anyway. If they think that is a good argument against SB 722, they should consider paying their own bills instead of passing their costs onto tenants (who are already paying their mortgages).
3. Think about the financial reality renters are expressing to you. We do not have the time or extra income to sue landlords as a result of SB 722.

Do not be swayed by landlord tears or RealPage's threats.

Renters make up 40% - 50% of the population in my city. We are the majority and we support SB 722. We support banning price-fixing software that artificially inflates the cost of the rental market and misinforms about vacancies. Renters are using 50% to 80% of our paychecks on rent. Landlords are evicting whole families for non-payment of rent at unprecedented rates. Landlords are causing the homelessness crisis.

Landlords have caused this housing crisis.

HB 722 will slow the eviction rate and make landlords have to bargain face to face with renters, resulting in more fair rent costs; just like face to face bargaining helps unions get better pay, face to face agreements about leases and rents will help renters be charged a price they can actually afford to pay timely and in full each month.

My fellow renter activists and I have surveyed and intentionally talked to renters in all Portland districts as well as East Multnomah County (East of District 1). My fellow

renters agree that rent is too high. We want the narrative to change from being about the (artificial/faked) housing market to being about the humans who need housing. It is a basic need. We know what we are talking about when we tell you rent is too high. Help us stop the spikes in rent and stop the artificial vacancy rates by supporting SB 722. Help us slow the eviction rate by banning landlords from using software that artificially price-fixes rents as well as vacancy rates. People are being evicted because no matter how hard they try to earn that money each month, their paychecks are not good enough for the landlords who are inflating the market with the help of RealPage and other software that has allowed them to artificially fixes rent costs and vacancy rates - causing the homelessness and housing crisis.

I am tired of feeling like my and my fellow renters' paychecks may be a few dollars short of our rent costs and that I will receive a pay or quit notice on my door. I am a life long renter and most of my pay check goes to rent and has my whole life. Do not allow landlords to make me give them even more due to software that is fakes the market. Listen to renters.

SB 722 is the only policy tool on the table this session that would have a timely, direct protection for all Oregon renters living in fear about rent costs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities. Please serve us well by supporting SB 722.

In urgency,
Lea Belton
Lifelong renter & co-chair, DSA Housing Working Group