

Submitter: Laura Thomas
On Behalf Of: Myself
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure: SB611

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

My name is Laura Thomas. I work for Prime Residential who has owned apartments in Oregon for decades. Please vote NO on SB 611.

Strict rent control is not the answer to Oregon's housing problems and will only make housing even more unaffordable than it already is. Indeed, since rent control was implemented in 2019, rents have only gone up. And that is because Oregon has failed to address the most critical need in housing – which is to dramatically increase supply. There is no way that the state will achieve its goal of introducing 36,000 units per year with increased burdens on rents. It is already extremely costly to build housing in Oregon and this will only make matters worse because there will be no interest in spending such sums to build housing if those costs cannot be recouped. Increased rent control will create a vicious cycle of stagnating supply, driving up rents, and putting even more pressure on existing housing providers, forcing repeats of this cycle.

Strict rent control will have other negative effects. It will hinder capital expenditure and maintenance, critical needs for housing providers. That is because all other expenses, such as property taxes, insurance, utilities have all been increasing dramatically. Thus, in order to maintain positive cash flow (i.e., to avoid having less revenue than your costs), buyers and owners would have to reduce their capital spend – which would create a dangerous deferral of property maintenance.

Ultimately, SB 611 is not the answer. Oregon needs to prioritize increasing supply for the long-term, but in the short-term, look to assist renters by greatly expanding rental assistance programs. The government has a role to play in the lack of supply and has a role to play in assisting tenants while it tries to address the problem – not put the problem squarely on the shoulders of housing providers, who already provide the service of housing Oregonians. VOTE NO ON SB 611.

Sincerely,
Laura Thomas