



Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Sheila Stiley, Board chair – NW Coastal Housing

Kymberly Horner, Vice-chair - Portland Community Reinvestment Inc.

Rachael Duke, Secretary - Community Partners for Affordable Housing

Kristy Rodriguez, Treasurer - Housing Authority of Malheur & Harney Counties

Trell Anderson – Northwest Housing Alternatives

David Brandt - Housing Works

Wakan Alferes - Homes for Good

Rita Grady – Polk CDC

Maria Elena Guerra - Farmworker Housing Development Corp

Nkenge Harmon Johnson – Urban League of Portland

Brad Ketch – Rockwood CDC & Community Dev. Corp. of Oregon

Erica Mills – NeighborWorks Umpqua

Shannon Vilhauer – Habitat for Humanity Oregon

Rep. Julie Fahey
Chair, House Rules Committee
900 Court St NE,
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Honorable Chair Fahey and members of the Committee:

We strongly urge you to pass SB 611 as a critical homelessness prevention strategy, to protect seniors, families, individuals and communities across the state from extreme rent increases and displacement.

Affordable housing and tenant protections are not an “either/or” issue; it’s “yes and.” Yes, there is a lack of affordable housing available to rent. And it is still important to advocate for tenant rights. Renter protections bring dignity and justice to the landlord-tenant relationship.

Housing Oregon is a membership-based statewide association of affordable housing community development corporations (CDCs) committed to serving and supporting low-income Oregonians across the housing needs spectrum – from homeless to homeowner.

Housing Oregon had over three dozen developers vote on this proposal, and we had only one “no” vote. As a coalition of both nonprofit and for-profit housing developers, we stand ready and willing to help Gov. Kotek meet her 36,000 units / year goal for new construction.

Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and they already pay the ninth highest rent in the nation. The statewide stories of massive rent increases in communities large and small show that we have a rent crisis that must be addressed. Whether these increases are hitting entire buildings or mobile home parks or individuals, each and every one puts people at risk of displacement and homelessness.

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.

The rent increase reports from across Oregon show the great need for SB 611. Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. 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. 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. The legislature did the right thing in passing the first rent limit in 2019, but as we have all learned now, the limit did not account for runaway inflation.

We know these extreme rent increases are not isolated incidents. There are so many that the results are playing out in eviction court and in media headlines. More than 86% of all eviction filings are due to unaffordable rent. This reasonable proposal prevents extreme rent increases and displacements, while allowing landlords to take inflation into account and preserving the ability to reset rents to market rates in between tenancies.

Please pass SB 611 as soon as possible and help ensure that all Oregonians have access to safe and affordable housing. Thank you very much for your consideration of our comments and for your service to our state. You can reach me at 971-347-8503 or kevin@housingoregon.org.
Sincerely,

Kevin Cronin

Director of Member Relations and Industry Support
Housing Oregon