

Submitter: Sarah Spansail

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3503

Hello Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and members of the committee. Thank you for receiving my testimony today. My name is Sarah Spansail and I am a Medford City Councilor. The following is my personal opinion, not that of the City of Medford. I am writing to you today to urge you to support HB 3503, which would lift the ban on local rent control.

Nearly half of all residents of Medford live in rental housing, and I know from both statistical and anecdotal evidence that rents in Medford are unaffordable for so many of my constituents. This problem of unaffordable rents has caused many other problems affecting our entire community. Too many people are spending so much of their income on rent that they don't have money to spend in local businesses, on their families, and they definitely don't have the ability to save money to deal with unforeseeable emergencies, or for a downpayment on a home. High rents are hurting our whole city.

You have heard of the Almeda fire that scorched Jackson county in 2020 and burned down thousands of homes, including many in Medford. What you may not have heard about is how that fire left hundreds of families homeless, some of whom still haven't found permanent housing. The City of Medford would like to do more to house these survivors, and anyone who is being forced to sleep outdoors exposed to the elements. The statewide prohibition on rent control has prevented us from making the kinds of policies that could get more people into stable and affordable housing.

The inevitable result of unaffordable housing is homelessness, and the inevitable result of homelessness is shorter and lower quality lives for everyone. In Medford, homeless people die from exposure more often than I would care to recount. Rising rents are not only making it impossible to find that next rung of housing for those on the streets, but also making it nearly impossible for our community to provide affordable workforce housing. Our largest employers let our city know regularly how this is inhibiting their ability to properly staff our local hospitals and other businesses.

Policies that make sense and work for Portland don't always work for Medford and other smaller cities throughout the state. Having control over our community's housing policies would allow us to meet the challenges of unaffordable housing, and the homelessness it causes, in a way that makes sense for Medford. For these reasons I'm urging you to repeal the state's prohibition on local rent control. The more tools we have in our toolboxes to discuss as a council and community, the more we will be able to support not only our city's most vulnerable residents, but also

our local economy and everyone's quality of life.