



March 19, 2025

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

My name is Cynthia Ramirez and I am a Policy Associate with PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. I am testifying on behalf of PCUN in support of SB 722, which will help prevent displacement and extreme rent spikes by extending coverage of our state's rent stabilization statutes, and prohibiting the use of price-fixing software to inflate rents.

PCUN works to empower farmworkers and Latinx working families to improve their working and living conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy. Our members have voted to make housing justice a top priority for the organization. PCUN has advocated for affordable housing. Our organization and members support rent stabilization and protecting Oregonians from suffering due to rent extreme spikes.

The cost of living has dramatically increased these past years, causing a big financial burden to our communities. Extreme rent spikes are putting our most vulnerable communities at risk. Our farmworker community has one of the lowest salaries in Oregon, averaging \$34,500 annually. They're already living paycheck to paycheck and cannot afford the current cost of living. In a study done by the Latino Community Association located in Central Oregon, they reported that Latinx households experience a significantly higher degree of housing need and severe housing need compared to white households. Additionally, Latinx families pay a large portion of their income on rent or mortgage. Leaving much less money for other necessities such as food, medicine, transportation, and savings.¹

Our communities are struggling between choosing to pay for rent, food, and other basic necessities. The minimum wage is not increasing in conjunction with the extreme rent spikes. Hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet- and this should not be the case. Our communities should not be on the border of homelessness.

¹ <https://latinocommunityassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/LCO-Housing-10-11-20.pdf>

SB 722 is the only policy tool on the table this session that would provide immediate and measurable protection for Oregonians suffering due to rent spikes as a result of our state's affordable housing crisis.

The bill reduces the current 15 year exemption for new construction from our statewide rent stabilization statute down to 7 years. This change would provide reasonable rent stabilization protection for an additional 40,000 housing units and between 80,000 to 100,000 Oregonians. This proposed change strikes a balance between continuing to encourage new units to come into the market and ensuring that those units do not contribute to long-term gentrification and price inflation.

The bill also amends the Landlord-Tenant Act to prohibit the use of price-fixing AI software to artificially inflate rents. These kinds of products are the subject of national attention and concern, and Oregon has joined a federal lawsuit against this practice. Many local jurisdictions are taking steps to curtail this practice. Price fixing has no place in Oregon, and we cannot afford to allow this practice to exacerbate our housing crisis.

On behalf of PCUN, I urge your strong support of SB 722 because we believe all Oregonians deserve affordable, sustainable housing.

Thank you,

Cynthia Ramirez
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PCUN