



March 25, 2023

Senator Kayse Jama  
Chair, Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
900 Court St NE, S-409  
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Support for Senate Bill 611**

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee,

The Welcome Home Coalition, over 80 nonprofit organizations in the Portland Metro Area with the common vision of ensuring everyone has access to an affordable and stable home in our region, urges your support of Senate Bill 611. SB 611 is a critical homelessness prevention strategy that will protect seniors, families, individuals, and communities across the state from extreme rent increases and displacement.

The 2022 “Out of Reach” report from The National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that a \$33/hour wage is required to afford an average two-bedroom apartment in the Portland Metro Area. We know that thousands of working people in our region are making wages much less than this and are one missed paycheck, high healthcare bill or other setback away from losing their homes. Further, extreme rent increases are driving people out of their homes. We must put policy in place to slow the rapid rise in housing costs or our housing crisis will only worsen. Today more than 86% of all court evictions are due to a missed rent payment. The situation is more serious for Black Oregonians, who are 30% less likely to be homeowners and more likely to be renters due to the legacy of historic policies that blocked them from purchasing and owning property.

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.

Here is the problem we are facing. Under current law:

- 2023 rent increases for properties 15 or more years old can be as high as 14.6%. That is too high for anyone to afford, outpacing wages and Social Security.



- There are no limits at all on rent increases in buildings 15 years or newer. Reports of extreme increases such as 32%, 47%, 50% are becoming more common. These increases are the functional equivalent of an eviction.
- When people must vacate due to no fault of their own, Oregon's tight and expensive rental market makes it hard to quickly find a new home.

**SB 611 would:**

- Limit rent increases to 3% + inflation with maximum increase of 8% during a calendar year.
- Narrow the loophole, applying rent stabilization to buildings older than 3 years, which increases the number of people protected while exempting new construction.
- Increase relocation assistance to three-months' rent to help tenants displaced through no fault of their own avoid homelessness. Landlords with four units or less are exempt from this provision.
- Set no limits on rent resets between tenants.

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.

Oregon's housing emergency goes beyond lack of supply and the number of people living without homes or shelter. We have a rental emergency as well, with tenants living just one rent increase notice away from displacement and possible homelessness. Without SB 611 to stop runaway and extreme rent increases, we will continue to see people displaced onto the streets more quickly than we can rehouse people. Without passage of SB 611, Oregon's success in addressing the housing crisis is at grave risk.

Please pass SB 611 as soon as possible.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Molly Hogan".

Molly Hogan, Director, Welcome Home Coalition