

Submitter: Miranda Tarrow

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB611

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony supporting SB 611. I am currently employed in housing services, working with low-income and often homeless clients, and a cost-burdened renter myself.

SB 611 is a critical homelessness prevention strategy, protecting seniors, families, individuals and communities across the state from extreme rent increases and displacement. In the past two years, I've seen my once-affordable apartment community - including artists, entrepreneurs, students, clerks, deli workers, marketing reps, medical office staff, retirees, and persons with disabilities - be quickly torn apart by rent increases near 10% each year and ongoing no-cause evictions. One of my displaced neighbors was an elderly terminal cancer patient. We were not just neighbors, but truly a friendly, supportive *community* with several members living here over a decade.

4 in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and we already pay the 9th highest rent in the nation. 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 affect entire rental properties or individuals, each and every one puts people at risk of homelessness. Housing instability also traps many renters in poor situations. For example, we can't save up for permanent housing, confidently budget for continuing education, or even relocate for proximity to transit or employment when a spike in rental cost can suddenly derail our finances.

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's 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 up to 50% are becoming more common. These increases are the functional equivalent of an eviction.

When people have to vacate due to no fault of their own, Oregon's tight and expensive rental market makes it very 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.

SB 611 offers a generous compromise to landlords, preserving their ability to reset rents between tenancies.

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. 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.

These extreme rent increases are not isolated incidents; the results are playing out in eviction court and in media headlines. More than 86% of all eviction filings are due to unaffordable rent. Oregon's housing emergency is inextricably tied to a brutal rental market, with tenants just one rent increase notice away from displacement and possible homelessness. Without SB 611 to slow runaway rent increases, we will continue to see people displaced onto the streets more quickly than we can rehouse them.

Please pass SB 611 as soon as possible. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Miranda L. Tarrow