

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 611B. My name is Musonda Mwango and I am a father, a tenant and I currently serve as the board treasurer for the Community Alliance of tenants.

We strongly urge you to pass SB 611B as a critical homelessness prevention strategy for seniors, families, individuals and communities across the state suffering from rent spikes.

As a board member of the largest tenant organization in the state, I have a unique opportunity to see and hear about the perils that Oregon's tenants have been facing especially after the pandemic. Of course, the issues of unfettered rent increases existed way before year 2020, but the pandemic exacerbated its effects. It goes without saying that, tenants are in dire straits as many lost their sources of income during the pandemic. Many are still reeling from its effects. My organization, the Community Alliance of Tenants, has had a front row seat on this issue as we have seen an increased need for rent assistance on our hotline. It is not lost on me that landlords and developers have to make a profit through their business ventures, but this equation is never complete without the recognition of the third prong of the equation; Tenants! They bear the brunt of inflation, economic upheavals, and the uncertainty of government regulations that affect their everyday lives. It is important to acknowledge that most tenants come from minority, impoverished and marginalized communities. These also happen to constitute the majority of your electorates. Therefore, as elected officials, your mandate is upholding the dignity of their welfare. This is not an issue that is merely based off your ability to maintain your legislative positions. It is an opportunity to look at their interests and humanity

while also examining your own motivation for being in a legislative position. You have a unique opportunity to prove your commitment to them without a shadow of a doubt!

Senate Bill 611B provides reasonable and necessary rent stabilization for tenants, while protecting landlords' and developers' ability to maintain a reasonable profit. Lawmakers did the right thing passing SB 608 in 2019. But we are now facing extreme inflation and without this bill, SB 611B, the 2023 rate increase is an unreasonable 14.6%! Tens of thousands of renters are at risk of displacement due to these extreme rent increases.

Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and they pay the ninth highest rent in the nation. Statewide, we have seen stories of massive rent increases in communities large and small, urban and rural, evidencing 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 a household at risk of displacement and homelessness.

Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. Our current law is allowing extreme rent spikes and the results are playing out in eviction court. Between October and March of this past year, the average was more than 2,000 eviction filings a month, and approximately 86% of all filings were due to unaffordable rent.

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.

SB 611B is a reasonable proposal that will prevent extreme rent increases and displacements, while allowing landlords to take inflation into account and preserving the current law's ability to reset rents to market rates in between tenancies. New properties continue to be exempt from the law, ensuring there is no impact on new development.

SB 611B 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.

Please pass SB 611B as soon as possible.

Thank you.

Musonda Mwango