

My name is Fiona Burgess, I am a lifelong resident of Portland currently living in the Southwest, and I am writing to throw my whole-hearted support behind this bill. As someone who comes from a family of property owners, I must say that anyone opposing this bill on the basis that it would jeopardize the housing market is practicing willful ignorance on the power dynamics between landlords and tenants.

Landlords argue that if this bill passes, they will need to tighten their qualifications, giving "less qualified" tenants less housing options. The fact of the matter is that most so-called "risky" tenants are already "unqualified" on the basis of wealth. Property values in metropolitan areas have already skyrocketed due to the upsurge of new residents in the last decade, to the point where people who grew up here cannot afford to buy a home and can barely afford to rent. As with any gentrifying force, this trend has also disproportionately affected people of color (here: <https://multco.us/multnomah-county/news/2017-point-time-count-more-neighbors-counted-homeless-2015-more-sleeping>): in a 2017 Multnomah County study, it was found that people of color made up 40.5% of the county's homeless population, compared to 29% of the general population.

When prices are this high, how does the "loss" a landlord incurs by selling a property they were hoping to exploit for longer compare to the loss that renters face when they and their families lose their home-- often leading to loss of employment, healthcare, any kind of social mobility, and (when winter inevitably rolls around) lives?

While the pandemic has certainly raised the stakes and exposed more renters to danger (especially for the workers we've deemed "essential" who are not paid a living wage), the fact is that our housing situation in Oregon was never sustainable in the first place. I'm generally not a fan of turning life or death situations into a numbers game, but I will argue that if the legislature is truly concerned with the housing crisis, they should recognize that the loss of support among landlords inflating housing prices is a pittance compared to the loss of economic stability for the majority of Oregonians, and the loss of lives among our disproportionately large homeless population. I hope that with this bill, our legislature recognizes the right to peace of mind for renters in their first year, rather than upholding the privilege of landlords to uproot renters' lives to make way for those with deeper pockets and continue gentrifying our urban centers at the expense of lifelong residents.

Sincerely,
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