

Submitter: Amber Cook

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB2001

Greetings,

I'm an author & artist and seasonal income tax preparer.

As

- a renter since college,
 - a current low income renter in LIHTC housing,
 - a tenant organizer,
 - a commissioner on the Rental Serves Commission,
 - and a professional eviction court observer for the PSU Research Study on Evictions in Oregon,
- I'd like to say how badly SB2001 is needed.

Renters are having a very hard time of it with the combination of:

- 1) rents raised for over a decade far beyond what most people can actually earn in Oregon
- 2) big business allowed to cut worker pay & hours down to a non-livable wage along with no tangible benefits,
- 3) and now the artificial rise in prices of a false inflation but with real higher prices for working consumers.

Every day dozens of people are evicted in the Multnomah County courthouse alone, while dozens more move out and are displaced without a fight. Day after day after day. I've seen firsthand how many renters tell the court, I have the money now, or I got rent assistance, but my landlord wouldn't accept it, and they get evicted right then and there. Why? Because the landlord is trying to bypass the very reasonable rent cap.

Where I live, residents are being given eviction notices every week for being unable to pay rent. The eviction process is fast, and it takes time for RA to be dispensed. In a society where now every place is overwhelmed and understaffed, renters & rental assistance distributors MUST HAVE more time.

Nowhere is the power imbalance btwn landlords & tenants so obvious as at eviction court, where a well-off landlord can pay an agent and/or lawyer to rep them in court, while a working renter has to figure out how to make a court date while having a job and a family/household to take care of, often struggling with no tech, language

barriers, and poverty as well. If the landlord makes a mistake at court, they just refile and come back next week; if a renter makes a mistake, they are summarily evicted. Being sick, having a car accident, being forced to work that day, are all irrelevant to the court. No show = immediate default eviction.

The courts are shamelessly refusing to share any resources for tenants with tenants at court, from rent assistance to the Eviction Defense Project, because evictions are a money-making business for the courts and for their blossom buddies the lawyers. This has got to stop. Mandate fairness & education above profit & privilege.

SB2001 is not enough in itself, but it is a vital part of what's sorely needed to meet basic renter needs and to help keep thousands more from becoming homeless in the next year. Without harming landlords in any way.

Landlords love to tell you that being a landlord is too hard. It's too much work. It costs too much. That if we make it any harder, landlords will sell their properties and stop being landlords and there'll be nowhere for people to live.

In the history of property ownership and housing ownership, there has never once been a shortage of landlords, and there never will be. If some of the current crop of landlords can't make enough money to satisfy their needs, I mean, greeds—because they have plenty to live on, then they can stop being landlords and others will take up the jobs happily, happy to make a decent profit without needing to harm others to get even more money out of them.

Renters forced out of their homes when they have or can get the money to pay and just need a little more time will not be fine. In this city with landlords purposefully driving their renters out to get around the rent raise cap and be able to charge *even* higher rents to new renters, there's nowhere for the displaced renter to go they can afford. So putting some reasonable pressure on landlords to keep their current tenants is a necessary step to take until landlord expectations of greed are tempered back down to affordable rents and a decent profit margin for themselves.

Best,
Amber