

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



SUPPORT SB 722 IMPROVEMENTS TO OREGON'S RENT STABILIZATION PROTECTIONS MARCH 18, 2025

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

My name is Shannon Rose and on behalf of the Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force (Oregon SATF), I submit this letter in strong support of SB 722, which will help prevent displacement and extreme rent spikes by extending coverage of our state's rent stabilization statutes and prohibiting the use of price-fixing software to inflate rents. **Access to stable and affordable housing is one of the biggest challenges for victims and survivors of sexual and domestic violence who are seeking safety and fleeing abuse.**

Formed in 1999 by then Attorney General Hardy Meyers, the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (or Oregon SATF) is a statewide, nongovernmental nonprofit with a mission to facilitate and support a collaborative, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence. Oregon SATF's programs take a multidisciplinary approach to both prevention and response and our 100+ advisory committee members comprise a diverse network of survivors, community members, and professionals dedicated to this mission. Across our membership and our programs, we frequently hear of the devastating impacts that lack of access to affordable housing has on survivors of sexual violence, including forcing survivors to stay housed in places where they continue to be subjected to violence and abuse. This is true for Oregon's students of higher education, as we know through the work in our College and University Campus Program, where we see that students may be forced to leave their school and education when affordable housing options separate from the person harming them are lacking and unavailable.

Preserving housing stability is essential for all survivors of sexual and domestic violence in Oregon.

As our state's housing crisis has escalated, our network of domestic and sexual violence shelters have been particularly impacted. Survivors fleeing violence have fewer places they can afford to go and are therefore more reliant on the shelter network. Survivors in shelter are forced to stay longer, because it is harder to find affordable safe places to move to, whether transitional or permanent housing. This means shelters have less space to offer survivors fleeing, and more people are forced to choose between homelessness and staying in an unsafe home.

For these reasons, advocates for survivors of sexual and domestic violence are seeking more support for their shelter and emergency services, but are also prioritizing advocacy for long term systemic housing policy changes that better support survivors and prevent homelessness. It is this perspective that brings us to support SB 722.

SB 722 will provide important improvements to Oregon's current rent stabilization statutes that will help prevent against extreme rent spikes and inflated rents, thereby protecting housing stability for survivors. Recent studies have highlighted a significant correlation between housing cost burdens, instability or homelessness and an increased risk of experiencing domestic or sexual violence.

- The lack of safe, stable, and affordable housing can trap individuals in abusive relationships, as the absence of alternative accommodations may force them to remain with their abusers.
- Individuals facing unstable housing situations are more vulnerable to various forms of abuse, including physical, sexual, psychological, and financial abuse.
- Homelessness is a risk factor for experiencing rape or sexual assault, with homeless individuals facing disproportionately high rates of sexual violence.
- A recent study indicated that domestic violence was the cause for 49% of women experiencing homelessness in Oregon and Washington.

At Oregon SATF, we often triage calls and emails from survivors of sexual assault who have no where safe to go because shelter beds are full and housing is out of their economic reach. We do our best to connect these community members with programs in their area that may be able to provide some financial and/or housing relief, but all too often they reach back out saying there are simply not enough resources - not enough affordable housing - to meet the current needs, thus once again putting them at increased risk of further violence.

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.

SB 722 is the only policy tool on the table this session that would provide immediate and measurable protection for Oregonians suffering due to rent spikes as a result of our state's affordable housing crisis. These proposed changes strike a balance between continuing to encourage new units to come into the market and ensuring that those units do not contribute to long-term gentrification and price inflation.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,



Shannon Rose
Executive Director
Oregon Sexual Assault Task Force