

Submitter: Mearl Grabill

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB611

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee:

My name is Mearl Grabill and I am an 85-year old senior retiree residing in Eugene, who moved here from Indiana a little more than a year ago to be near my daughter and her family.

I strongly urge passage of SB 611, which addresses the critical need to control the annual increase of rental charges in retirement communities here in Oregon to 3% plus CPI per year or an annual average of 8% whichever is less.

The reality of the affordable housing emergency grabbed my attention when the new out-of-state owners of my retirement community, the Eugene Hotel Retirement Center, notified some of its senior residents (including me) that our rent would be increased 14% in 2023. Historically, the former owners (local citizens of the Eugene community) had verbally agreed to increase the rent at an annual rate of 3% per year. That means that retired residents, many of whom are on limited or fixed incomes, face an increase in rent from \$220 to \$330 per month, (\$2640 to \$3960 annually) depending on the size of the apartment. The sudden and sheer increase in rent is generally viewed by our residents as excessive and personally unsustainable in the future. If I face rent increases like the one this year for several consecutive years in the future, I will have to look for more affordable housing elsewhere (if it exists)!

Since November, several senior residents have moved out; within the past week, four more seniors announced their departure by the end of this month and many others are thinking seriously of the same option. The prospect of an unstable future is increasingly becoming the "new norm" for retirees residing at the Eugene Hotel! Is that the "Oregon Way" to treat your senior citizens?

Furthermore, the monthly "rent" includes charges for food, transportation, maintenance, utilities, and certain personal care and entertainment services that most rent amounts don't include. Yet, the increase in rent was based on the total amount not just the amount for occupying our living space. If only the "rent" were considered, the rate of increase would be noticeably higher. And, I am certain that their personnel costs have not increased by 14% during 2022 and thus far in 2023! I suspect that a large part of the additional "rent" increase apparently goes to elevate the profit margin for owners/investors.

Landlords who seek such high increases in rent annually or have as their business plan to maximize profit should NOT be allowed to purchase and "spin" senior retirement communities where individuals on limited or fixed income have to carefully plan their long-term plans around limited resources. Two or three years of 10+% annual increases in rent can take rental expenses far beyond an affordable range.

Once a retiree reaches that level of expense, is there an acceptable AND affordable (to ordinary people) alternative?

There is no denying that the lack of affordable and available housing and the abrupt and disproportionately high financial burden placed on the low or fixed income, young adult and seniors, women, minorities and other at-need populations constitute an unfair price for unjust laws that destabilize too many lives.

I strongly urge you to pass SB 611 as quickly as possible. Thank you for your consideration and your public service.

Sincerely,  
Mearl Grabill