

Submitter: Lurelle Robbins
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure: SB611

Dear Senator Jama, Chair
Committee members and
interested parties

RE SB 611

I ask you to oppose SB 611. The title summary is simplistic and misleading.

First I would like to recognize that there is a housing crisis in Oregon and across the nation if not the world. The crisis in it's simplest form is that people do not have enough money to make their rent and house payments resulting in too many people forced to live on the streets. The crisis is not fully attributable to but coincides with a drug crisis and a mental health crisis.

There is a system problem - A few corporations, governments and people have most of the money in the world and neither tenants nor landlords should be punished because of this system problem. The Covid crisis has shown us that the current systems are not capable of responding in a timely manner. They failed to communicate with tenants or landlords and they denied tenants requests without explanation (reason) and without a process for review. Tenants are stressed, landlords are stressed and the system informs tenants often that they have no money.

This bill is excessively complicated and fails to provide rent to people when they need it most. The bill is an effort to put band-aids on an issue that must realistically be attributable to a system wide problem. If we fail to address the underlying system problem we continue to allow all these problems continue.

The tenants I know do not want an attorney, they want to get their rent paid and they want a simple one stop place to find the assistance they need in a timely manner.

In 2008 during the last financial crisis I was barely able to move money from day to day to collect timely and late rents and to pay maintenance, repair and utility bills. As we approach another financial crisis this is not a good time for an experiment in adding increase costs and time delays. Neither tenants nor landlords can continue when incomes are limited and costs of maintenance, repairs, utilities and property taxes continue to increase.

Now is not the time to pass SB 611. It is time to create a system in Oregon where people can get rent assistance when they need it without delay. Let's demand that current agencies respond to tenant requests immediately with needed funds and with timely communication to the tenant and the landlord. This bill attempts to have landlords pay tenants long after the time when the tenant actually applied for and needed rent assistance all while limiting the funds available to the landlord for operational expenses.

I ask you to oppose SB 611 and let's work together to create a real solution to the real problem: average people unable to pay their rent and/or house payments.

Thank you for your consideration,

Lurelle Robbins
Paramedic, retired
Past Chair, The Democratic Party of Multnomah County
Landlord