

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Subject: Support for SB 611 to reduce high-rent homelessness

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Dr. Andrea Haverkamp and I live in Southeast Portland. I am writing to express support for Senate Bill 611 on behalf of AFT-Oregon who has endorsed SB 611 is part of the Homelessness Prevention Package within the Fair Shot Agenda. Our labor federation represents over 18,000 members across the education workforce of Oregon. This bill is good for working people, their children, and our communities. It sets reasonable, predictable rent increases for tenants which we support:

- Limits rent increases to 3% + inflation with maximum increase of 8% during a calendar year.
- Narrowing the loophole, applying rent stabilization to buildings older than 3 years, which increases the number of people protected while exempting new construction.
- Increases relocation assistance to three-months' rent to help tenants displaced through no fault of their own avoid homelessness. Landlords with four units or less are exempt from this provision.
- Sets no limits on rent resets between tenants.

Students, school staff, faculty, and our communities across Oregon live in some of the most rent-burdened cities in Oregon. Oregon Housing and Community Services released a report on rent burdens on March 2nd, 2023. A renting household suffering severe rent burden is one that spends more than 50% of their gross household income on rent. At the top of the list were the following cities:

- Corvallis – 37.7% Severely Rent Burdened. This is where union faculty, instructors, and researchers at Oregon State University live and work. Graduate Assistants are especially impacted by this.
- Eugene – 30.5% Severely Rent Burdened. Similarly, the home of University of Oregon, and union graduate assistants, researchers, faculty, and more within our labor federation.
- Monmouth – 33.2% Severely Rent Burdened. Home of Western Oregon University and union faculty.

We also represent workers across Portland State University, Portland Public Schools, Portland Community College and more. Portland and its surrounding suburbs are frequently at 25% or higher percentage of population under Severe Rent Burden. Overall and across the board, our members, their families, and the communities we serve need change. Our union members in Southern and Eastern Oregon have also expressed how it is not just a West Oregon problem – it's statewide. SB 611 is much needed for Oregonians.

The current allowable rent increases of 14.6% are obviously too high. Few people can afford such rent increases. The current law also has a huge loophole that allows unlimited rent increases for many buildings and landlords have been exploiting that loophole. Rent increases of 32%, 50% or more are becoming more common, according to media reports. Too many people in our communities are one missed paycheck, high healthcare bill or other setback away from losing their homes, and extreme rent increases are driving people out of their homes. Furthermore, already vulnerable Oregonians are still struggling to be whole again after the pandemic. Today more than 86% of all court evictions are due to a missed rent payment. The situation is more serious for Black Oregonians, who are 30% less likely to be homeowners and more likely to be renters due to the legacy of historic policies that blocked them from purchasing and owning property.

AFT-Oregon has endorsed the Fair Shot Agenda and urges your yes vote on SB 611 alongside the Fair Shot Coalition. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Dr. Andrea Haverkamp
Political Organizer
AFT-Oregon