



June 21, 2023

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 611. My name is Kelly Peterson, and I am the Oregon senior state director for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS).

We strongly urge you to pass SB 611 as a critical homelessness prevention strategy for seniors, families, individuals, and communities across the state suffering from housing insecurity and rent spikes.

The HSUS and our affiliates believe that a person's socioeconomic or housing status bears no relation to the bond people share with their companion animals. Through our shelter partnerships and on-the-ground experience, we understand the impact that housing insecurity has on our communities—tearing families apart and contributing to overcrowded shelters. Low supply of affordable housing and rising rent costs have left Oregon residents with limited housing options. For those with pets, even fewer options exist as housing related issues are among the most cited reasons that pets are relinquished to shelters. Given the physical and mental benefits that come with pet ownership, we believe Senate Bill 611 will help protect people and their pets by addressing one of the core issues contributing to the state's housing and homelessness crisis.

SB 611 provides reasonable and necessary rent stabilization for tenants while protecting landlords' and developers' ability to maintain a reasonable profit. Lawmakers did the right thing passing SB 608 in 2019. But we are now facing extreme inflation and without SB 611, the 2023 rate increase is an unreasonable 14.6%. Tens of thousands of renters are at risk of displacement due to these extreme rent increases.

Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and they pay the ninth highest rent in the nation. Statewide, we have seen stories of massive rent increases in communities large and small, urban, and rural, evidencing a rent crisis that must be addressed. Whether these increases are hitting entire buildings, mobile home parks or individuals, each and every one puts a household at risk of displacement, trauma, and homelessness.

Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. Current Oregon law allows extreme rent spikes, and the results are playing out in eviction court. Between October and March of this past year, on average more than 2,000 evictions were filed each month, and approximately 86% of all filings were due to unaffordable rent.

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 611 is a reasonable proposal that will prevent extreme rent increases and keep families together, while allowing landlords to take inflation into account and preserving the current law's ability to reset

rents to market rates in between tenancies. New properties continue to be exempt from the law, ensuring there is no impact on new development.

SB 611 is an action that the legislature can take now to have an immediate impact on our state's housing crisis as we also work on the longer-term solutions of increasing supply and providing support to rehouse our currently homeless neighbors.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Kelly Peterson  
Oregon Senior State Director  
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