

Hello Chair Fagan, Vice Chair Girod, Members of the Committee,

My name is Lizbeht Marquez, I live in Monmouth and I'm a student at Western Oregon University. I am here to ask for your support for SB 608. I'm a Policy Associate for the Oregon Student Association who advocates for statewide student issues and interests that need to be protected in the Oregon legislature. The interests and issues that affect students go beyond tuition affordability for post-secondary education. Students across Oregon are also affected by Oregon's current law that fails to protect their housing stability.

It's no secret that Oregon has an increasing homeless population crisis. Additionally, the Portland Tribune reported that in 2018, Oregon ranked first in the nation in youth homelessness. However, most people fail to take into consideration that an invisible homeless population also exists. This population includes people who sleep in vehicles or are couch surfing and are at risk of permanently living on the street. Students now are more likely to become a part of the invisible homeless population due to tuition increases, extreme rent increases and no-cause eviction.

Current housing laws negatively affect students because they live in fear of not having stable and affordable housing. Having affordable housing helps alleviate student's finances because they are already in debt paying for their education. Students have become concerned about surviving that they are no longer able to focus on their educational aspirations. Students deserve the opportunity to succeed in school and in life, which is tied to having a stable home. Even though I'm a college student, I'm fortunate enough to not live in fear of losing my housing which allows me to focus on my education. This relief should be granted to everyone.

Furthermore, no-cause eviction notices and rent increases only perpetuate discrimination and retaliation, especially towards communities of color, seniors, people with disabilities, and people living on a low-income. Not to mention, current laws only protect landlords and promote poverty which leads to an increase in Oregon's homeless population crisis. Please take into consideration that almost half of Oregon households rent their homes, which means that a large population of people are at risk of losing their housing at any time.

I believe that housing affordability and stability shouldn't be a privilege but a right enjoyed by everyone. No one should live in fear of losing their housing because they can no longer afford it due to extreme rent increases. No one should live in fear of landlord retaliation because they asked to live in a clean, safe environment.

For too long Oregon laws have protected landlords leaving households vulnerable. It's time that the Oregon state legislature enact SB 608 that protects tenant's rights; to ensure that people are protected from no-cause evictions and that they have access to safe and affordable housing. Please vote yes on SB 608.

Thank you for your time and commitment to serve Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Lizbeht Marquez