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RE: Support for HB 2372

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, Members of the House Committee on Housing,

Portland Tenants United is writing today to express our strong support for HB 2372, which would eliminate no-cause evictions.

Portland Tenants United builds power and solidarity among the tenant class throughout the Portland metro region as a member-driven tenant union. Through organizing, direct action, coalition building, and civic engagement, Portland Tenants United fights to keep people in their homes, and to achieve dignity and security for all Portlanders who rent their homes.

In our role, we receive a constant stream of concerns from distressed tenants facing a wide array of challenges and threats to their homes. One of the most common recurring issues are evictions. In many cases these evictions are illegal. However, we regularly struggle to support tenants who are facing legal evictions. While SB 608, passed in 2019, eliminated most no-cause evictions in a big win for tenants and housing stability, it left many gaps that this bill will help to close.

Currently tenants can be evicted during their first year of tenancy. Due to the precarious nature of the housing market at this time, many people are forced to move on a regular basis, which has devastating effects at both the individual and community levels. In Portland people of color, and especially Black community members, face wave after wave of gentrification as they are pushed out of their homes daily. This means many Oregon families are in the first year of tenancy. In an attempt to maintain housing stability as rent continues to rise, many people move into shared housing options. Anytime the composition of people in a shared housing option changes, the tenants are once again considered to be in their first year of tenancy. This means a long time tenant who just got a new housemate is also at risk of a no-cause eviction. We regularly hear from tenants who are facing eviction because one housemate moved in within the last year, and have no resources for legal counsel.

Additionally, many of the people that turn to PTU for help live in shared housing with their landlord. The lack of separation can allow for small matters to escalate into larger tensions, and for the power imbalance of landlord/tenant to be expressed inequitably in the housemate relationship. These tenants need housing stability just as much as anyone else, and currently forfeit most of their rights by entering into an owner occupied housing arrangement.

HB 2372 would fix both of these issues by eliminating both types of no cause evictions, providing much needed stability for tenants all over Oregon. PTU writes in strong support of HB 2372.

Sincerely,
Portland Tenants United Organizing Committee