

Members of the House Committee on Housing,

I write to you today in strong support of HB 2372, which would eliminate no-cause evictions.

I am employed professionally as a social worker who works in assisting unhoused and housing insecure individuals as they navigate our housing assistance systems and attempt to find secure, stable housing. I am writing in support of this bill to eliminate no-cause evictions because my experience has shown me that it is a necessary step in adequately addressing Oregon's current housing crisis as well as in supporting Oregon's drive to become a more equitable and inclusive state.

No-cause evictions are a major accelerator of our housing crises and are directly responsible for the rising numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness in our state. No-cause evictions force tenants to live at the mercy of the whims of landlords, many of whom use no-cause evictions as a mechanism to discriminate against tenants based on race, gender, marriage status, income/occupational status, or often just because a landlord wants to raise rents in a unit and understands that a no-cause eviction may be the quickest route to that outcome. Often, no-cause evictions occur just because a landlord arbitrarily decides that they dislike a tenant, a disturbingly common occurrence. When a tenant is evicted, even without cause, it not only disrupts their housing stability in that moment but their ability to find stable housing in the future. Even a single eviction on a tenant's rental history can have devastating effects on their ability to pass rental screenings going forward, even in the case of a tenant who meets income requirements, is stably employed, and is otherwise responsible and stable. This greatly increases the probability that said tenant will have to spend time sleeping in their car, in an emergency shelter, or behind a dumpster in a sleeping bag.

No-cause evictions also reduce the effectiveness of existing housing assistance programs. The majority of housing assistance programs- rapid re-housing, Housing and Essential Needs, Tenant Based Rental Assistance, and so-on, don't guarantee housing as much as they provide cash stipends that tenants can use to pay for rentals in the private market. When a landlord no-cause evicts a tenant utilizing one of these programs, not only does it put an eviction on their rental history, it often means that tenants lose their social assistance, as most of these programs require that tenants maintain their housing to remain eligible for payments. These eligibility requirements exist regardless of whether or not the eviction is for-cause or no-cause, creating a vicious and inhumane cycle of tenants being housed then homeless again. Tenants wait years for assistance funding, find housing with a private landlord, receive a no cause eviction, have their assistance taken away, find themselves homeless again, and then become bumped to the back of the line, starting the cycle anew. This cycle is not only cruel and dehumanizing, but also incredibly inefficient and costly, significantly contributing to our current social assistance infrastructure's inability to truly make a dent in our current housing crisis. Eliminating no-cause evictions will make these programs more effective, efficient, and most importantly, humane.

I want to return to the issue of equity and inclusion. For the past several years, the State of Oregon has issued press releases and proclamations concerning its commitment to undoing the injustices of the past and promoting true racial equity and inclusion in the form of good public policy. Currently, no-cause evictions remain one of the most commonly utilized mechanisms to continuing racial discrimination in the housing market, both from landlords and due to the violent nature of evictions that place individuals of color at the receiving end of violent, racist policing. I cannot count how many clients I meet with on a daily basis who describe racial harassment from landlords that culminate in a no-cause eviction after the tenant stands up for themselves because of how commonly this occurs. No-cause evictions allow landlords to discriminate on the basis of race, gender, marital status, and everything else without having to leave a paper trail that can be used to hold them accountable. No-cause evictions increase the likelihood that individuals of color will be violently dragged out of their homes by the police that enforce said evictions. No-cause evictions continue the cycle of racism and discrimination that the legislature and executive branch have committed themselves to fighting and by not eliminating no-cause evictions, the legislature would be providing cover to this type of continuing discrimination. If the Oregon legislature is sincere in its efforts to promote equity and fight against discrimination, then it must pass this bill.

I urge you to move HB 2372 forward with a do-pass recommendation.

Sincerely,

Jacob Henceroth