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STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
HOUSE DISTRICT 35

Shortly after becoming State Representative the issues surrounding the Woodspring Apartments were brought to my attention. Woodspring apartments are currently home to 172 units that have historically been home to seniors. All affordable housing is built with use restrictions for a period of time – most often thirty or sixty years. At the end of that period, owners can either renew their commitments, or they can allow them to expire. The agreement to provide affordable rates for the residents at the Woodspring Apartments has expired and the owners plan to transition the complex to the private market rate. I have been fortunate to meet with residents and advocates, attend rallies, and meet with stakeholders in an attempt to find real solutions which would protect individuals and families who may abruptly need to search for new housing, or in some cases end up homeless.

SB 1557 is a reasonable solution that would support the residents of buildings whose owners have chosen to allow the restrictions to expire, rather than continuing to maintain properties as affordable housing. This legislation is a pilot program that would include Woodspring Apartments in Tigard, and Orchard Park in Salem.

This legislation would help the current tenants in those affordable housing units remain in their homes by providing a small rent assistance subsidy so they aren't displaced due to increased rents. Only residents who live in the building prior to conversion, and have no other tenant based assistance would be eligible for the subsidy.

This is targeted to prevent the displacement of existing residents who likely have nowhere else to go. This can either support them to stay in the housing, or give them the time needed to get onto waiting lists for other affordable housing properties, or wait for a housing choice voucher.

These are the types of upstream supports we need to see and this pilot program will explore one of the tools we have to support our most vulnerable renters. We must support individuals before they end up in crisis, especially when the change is the result of a choice that is not their own. Stable housing is the foundation in which all of our community services are built, we must ensure that foundation is supported if we want to have healthy communities. Please support SB 1557.