

RE: Support of SB 1557

Good afternoon Chair Jama, members of the committee;

My name is Alli Sayre and I'm a tenant and the elected organizing coordinator for Portland Tenants United, the Portland city-wide 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 tenants. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill 1557, which would create a pilot program to subsidize the rent of tenants whose landlords transition their rentals away from being affordable publicly-supported housing to so-called market rents.

I have met several of the tenants who live in the Woodspring Apartments, one of the two communities who would be impacted by this pilot program. Many of them are elderly and on fixed-incomes. It is not an exaggeration to say their fight to stay in their homes is a fight for their lives. They simply do not have anywhere else to go and have no other options. It is nearly impossible to get into subsidized housing in our ongoing affordable housing crisis and waitlists can be years long.

In a perfect world the owner of the Woodspring Apartments would be a moral actor and not raise the rents of these vulnerable elders until they are forced out. But sadly we do not live in a perfect world, we live in a world full of greedy landlords looking to make a quick buck on the backs of the tenant class. Landlords are more than happy to have us pay their mortgages and then kick us to the curb when we are no longer useful to them. They view housing as an "investment", not as the human right it actually is.

Let me be clear: the owners of Woodspring are bad people who are undeserving of this money. They are so afraid of their own tenants having a voice that they threatened them for having a garage sale to raise money to get the word out about their plight. They repeatedly unlawfully interfered with their tenants' rights to form a tenants union and deigned to intimidate the organizers into silence.

While the legislature cannot legislate morality, they can do something to keep the Woodspring residents in their homes. While PTU strongly disagrees with subsidizing this profiteering landlord, we believe the state has an obligation to step in and protect some of its neediest residents from a potential future where they are on the street. If we want to simply think of human beings in terms of their costs, it is much less costly to pay the excess rent this unscrupulous landlord is shamelessly charging than take on the consequences of pricing them out.



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In the case of Woodspring and Orchard Park Apartments, there is no other option but for the legislature to pass this bill. Their need is great and time is running out to prevent needless evictions of the occupants of these units. Please vote **yes** to advance SB 1557 so that when we see the evidence of this program's success next year we can next work to move the needle a bit and stop allowing so-called investors to put profits over people.