



Senate Committee on Housing & Development

Testimony in support of SB 799

January 30, 2023

My name is Bob Bruce. I am a resident of Salem, Oregon and a volunteer on the AARP Oregon Executive Council. In retirement, I've spent the past 20 years as a community volunteer: five years managing a soup kitchen in Corvallis, 10 years helping Oregonians find health care as a Medicare volunteer; and 17 years helping people do free tax returns.

I've met thousands of Oregon seniors and low-income families who struggle to put food on the table, buy costly prescriptions and manage meager household budgets to pay rent and other costs. I've heard heartfelt personal stories and I have seen desperation in the eyes of many Oregonians who struggle to pay everyday expenses.

Those stories are personal to me. And that's why I'm here to testify today on behalf of AARP in support of SB 799. I believe, as do many of my AARP colleagues and friends, that SB 799 will enact much-needed reforms and will provide greater housing stability to our vulnerable neighbors, friends and family members.

As you know, AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan social change organization. Our nationwide membership is nearly 38 million, with over 500,000 members in Oregon. We work to strengthen communities with a focus on health security and financial stability. An important aspect of our work in Oregon is advocating for livable and age-friendly communities, including expanding housing options and ensuring affordable, safe, secure, and accessible homes for Oregonians of all ages and abilities.

During the pandemic, AARP was proud to join with advocates from around the state to call for action to reduce evictions and keep people safe and stable in their homes. And we were pleased lawmakers took necessary action.

But now we must do more. Our housing crisis is not over in Oregon. In fact, for many the disruptions from the pandemic --increased caregiving responsibilities, rising health care costs, and loss of income --have meant greater housing instability.

The numbers tell the story. AARP data shows that this year, more than 5,600 adults -- age 45 and older --will experience homelessness in Oregon. An even higher number, almost 7,000 Oregonians - - 45 and older -- are expected to be evicted from their homes. Our data show that more than 50% of Oregonians experiencing homelessness and facing evictions are older adults.

We need many solutions to solve our critical humanitarian crisis. SB 799 is one important compassionate solution. We must act now to offer greater protection to the most vulnerable of our neighbors and provide them the time and support necessary to get the assistance needed to prevent eviction and homelessness.

On behalf of over half million AARP members ages 50+ statewide, I respectfully urge this committee to pass SB 799. Oregonians need your help and leadership once again.