

Please vote no on SB799

My husband and I have a family-owned, local property rental business. We work hard to maintain great relationships with our tenants and provide safe, clean apartments for them to live in.

In many neighborhoods where we operate (inner SE and NW Portland, downtown Bend) we are often the low-cost provider of rental units. We are slow to raise rents, particularly for our long-term, fixed income and rent-assisted tenants. As a result, we have several long-term tenants whose rent has increased by less than 3 percent a year over the past decade.

Since the pandemic, actions on the part of both local and state governments have made it more difficult for us to operate and maintain affordable housing. Local and county governments continue to raise taxes and implement new fees, while the regulations and systems implemented by the state during the pandemic made it virtually impossible for us to assist our tenants, even as they struggled to navigate complex rent-relief web-sites or secure help from other local agencies.

Always, now and for the last thirty years, by the time we reach the stage of even considering an eviction action, the tenant is well under water – not just behind a few months on rent. Eviction is always a measure of last resort, and this true for most if not all of the smaller, home-grown landlords we know. It is a costly, time-consuming and unpleasant process for everyone involved.

More often than not, when a tenant reaches this point, it is *not* because they lost their job or are experiencing a family crisis. Those issues do happen, but those renters almost always reach out and talk with us, and we in turn work with them to secure financial assistance, cancel late fees, and help keep them in their housing in any way we can.

Rather, a tenant who risks eviction often has accompanying issues that are way beyond our ability to help, and they are definitely not communicating with us or other potential assistance providers. At times, these individuals may pose a danger to other residents in their building, repair workers or themselves. They may simply disappear, leaving without notice, forwarding address or phone number. In the case of almost all evictions, there is little to no chance of recovering any unpaid rents or damages, which raises costs for landlords and other tenants alike.

If elected officials continue to extend unnecessary regulations, we will either need to abandon the low-cost model we have followed for 30 years, or simply leave these neighborhoods altogether. And if we do, what replaces us will not be a low-cost provider. If you wish to protect the rights and rent-values for the vast majority of Oregon tenants, you will not vote for SB 799. It hurts everyone.