

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee,

I am a recently re-elected member of the Talent City Council. I am speaking on behalf of myself, and my constituents.

I am here in strong support for SB 799, as well as the other bills in the Homelessness Prevention Package, which help improve housing security in communities like mine in rural Southern Oregon.

The Labor Day Fires Exacerbated Already Scarce Housing

Many of you know the situation in Talent. Two years ago, the Almeda fire destroyed 800 homes and 60 businesses, roughly a third of our small town. More than half of those homes destroyed were apartment units and manufactured homes.

Yet, even before the fire, here in Talent close to half our renter population was cost-burdened; and the vacancy rate for rentals in the region was around 2 percent.

As we rebuild, we can see how the Almeda fire disaster has exacerbated already existing disparities in our communities. The data tells us that the wealth gap between homeowners and renters is a strong indicator of who recovers faster. Single family homes are rebuilding faster than manufactured homes and apartment complexes, making rentals even more scarce.

In Talent, the Almeda fire disaster devastated an already strained housing ecosystem, which continues to threaten the housing security of our seniors, our working families, and folks who lost more than they could afford to lose.

Our Communities Need Housing Security and Stability

As we work through our recovery, we have found that working families and seniors in our community need adequate time to find the resources they need to respond to emergency situations – whether that is an epic climate disaster or a sudden loss of income or an unforeseen medical need.

SB 799 helps provide that time.

In Talent, we are working hard to bring our families home. Restoring community connection when so many have lost their homes is a community-wide effort. Unfair evictions threaten that community connection we are trying to restore.

Please do everything you can to keep our families housed.

Thank you!

Eleanor Ponomareff
Councilor 5, Talent City Council
Talent, Oregon