



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

March 3, 2023

Representative Maxine Dexter, Chair
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
900 Court St NE, H-283 Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 2754

Chair Dexter, Co-Vice Chair Gamba, Co-Vice Chair Helfrich, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony, on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, in strong support of HB 2754, which provides critical housing stabilization protections for seniors living in expiring affordable rental housing.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County. As a service provider for older adults, who are the fastest growing age segment of the population experiencing homelessness,¹ we know that there is a direct link between rental cost burdens for low-income seniors and their risk of homelessness. With more than half of all older adult renter households being cost burdened (paying more than 30% of their rent),² any increase in the cost of rent places an unbearable strain on households that are already struggling. The threat of displacement due to rent increases only exacerbates the risk of further homelessness and prolonged housing instability for low-income seniors.

Over the next 10 years, the affordability restrictions on 7,500 units of affordable rental housing statewide will expire, threatening the security of countless seniors on fixed incomes who will have few other housing options affordable to them in Oregon's private rental market. HB 2754 will reduce the risk of displacement for seniors living in expiring affordable rental housing by restricting rent increases to once a year, and prohibiting no-cause evictions during the first year after the property loses its affordability. Considering that waitlists for subsidized housing are often 3-5 years long, it is critical that low-income seniors remain stably housed while they wait for more affordable options.

¹ Homelessness Among Older Adults: An Emerging Crisis (Generations Journal, Summer 2020), Dr. Margot Kushel, American Society on Aging. <https://generations.asaging.org/homelessness-older-adults-poverty-health>

² Issue Brief: Low-Income Older Adults Face Unaffordable Rents, Driving Housing Instability and Homelessness (February 2021), Justice In Aging. <https://justiceinaging.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Older-Adults-Rental-Housing-Burdens.pdf>

HB 2754 is a reasonable measure to protect our most vulnerable community members from displacement, and address the crisis we are currently facing with thousands of affordable housing units losing their affordability in the coming years. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Golino de Lovato
Executive Director
Northwest Pilot Project