

March 21, 2023

To the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

This is Linda Sebring and I'm 70 years old. My husband and I contribute to the Eugene/Springfield community through volunteer work at two youth clubs, two marriage health organizations, and a camp for children impacted by incarceration. My husband has done pro-bono construction work on several occasions, including on the "Sheds of Hope" after the Holiday Farm Fire of 2020

We've worked hard for 50 years to build a portfolio of 13 rental units in Eugene and Springfield, all currently rented. This is our retirement plan. Our renters include people of color, people with different sexual orientations, and people with different spiritual beliefs, low-income single parents, refugees, and people who don't fall into any of those categories. They take reasonable care of our units and they pay their rent on time for the most part. In exchange, we provide them with quality housing. (So yes, we are housing providers, just like grocery stores are food providers.)

We've had renters who didn't pay their rent on time or take care of our units. They allowed their "emotional support animals" to urinate on our carpets, they left hundreds of holes in the walls, they failed to transfer the utilities into their names and/or failed to obtain garbage services, they allowed the grass to grow uncontrolled and weeds to choke the flowerbeds. One bought a new Harley Davidson and his wife had her nails professionally done every few weeks for 8 months while receiving rent assistance during the COVID eviction moratorium. It was stressful and costly to get these tenants out of our units. So we've had to become more careful and discerning about whom we will rent to.

Your proposed rules will hurt us and run the risk of increasing an already unhealthy entitlement attitude among some of the unhoused. Even more importantly, based on statistical data that has been previously presented to you, rent assistance and housing affordability rules do more harm to the rental market than good.

Rather than making it more difficult to own rentals and incentivizing unearned entitlement attitudes, here are three suggestions:

1. Reduce Eugene's and Springfield's ridiculous permit costs and rules for building new construction which, I believe are among the highest in the nation.
2. Invest in helping the unhoused overcome employment barriers so that they can earn a family wage and get into decent housing. Teaching people how to fish, rather than just giving them a fish. Jobs for Life™ (JobsforLife.org) is one example of such a program. Some communities are using this program to successfully address homelessness, unemployment, and under-employment. It not only gives the participants better employment opportunities and therefore housing, but also gives them a sense of purpose and dignity and encourages them to give back to their community.
3. Devote some of our tax dollars to educate people about the risks of using mind-altering drugs (legal and illegal) and the correlation between their use and homelessness.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Linda J. Sebring