

Submitter: Michelle Graas

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB611

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

I urge swift passage of SB 611. Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and are already paying some of the highest rents in the nation.

I've struggled to pay rent in the past, despite full-time employment: I've lived in homes that were physically unsafe and in homes which cost over half my take-home pay. While I am currently privileged to have a stable and secure home, many people in my community -- family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues -- continue to experience substandard housing.

A combination of high rents, first-last-deposit policies, and the sheer lack of available and safe housing in our state keep Oregonians on the margins. When rents dramatically increase, where are they supposed to go?

Housing inequities are destroying our state: too many people are working too hard to afford a fundamental basic need to be able to live up to their full potential. What would Oregon look like if we all had safe and stable housing? What could we accomplish?

We need to keep Oregon families safe and housed -- to keep Oregon Oregon, where we care for one another and prioritize community.

Everyone in Oregon deserves safe and stable housing but our high rental costs and housing inequities are forcing families out of their homes. While the Oregon housing market provides skyrocketing property wealth for landlords, renters have nothing to fall back on when their monthly costs rise beyond their paychecks.

Very few people can afford a 14.6% housing cost increase. Getting an increase that high may as well be an eviction notice for Oregon renters.

SB 611 is a reasonable approach. Allowable annual rent increases for current tenants will be more predictable for current tenants and more homes will be protected. And between tenants, landlords can charge whatever the market will bear for vacant units.

SB 611 does not solve all the inequities in our housing market, but it is an important

step to more fairness and is an essential element in the legislature's response to the state's housing and homelessness crisis.

Please vote yes on SB 611 to prevent more high-rent homelessness in our communities.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Graas