

Submitter: Henry Scheffer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB611

Dear Chair Jama and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

My name is Henry Scheffer and I write to you from the Boise neighborhood of N Portland, and I'm a member of the Portland Tenants Union. I'm writing to show support for SB 611 as the need for a lower rent cap is drastically needed in Oregon and especially the Portland metro area. For years we have seen the city swept by unending waves of gentrification, and this bill won't be the final nail in the coffin. However, it might stem the bleeding. Even in only the last 6 years when I've lived in Portland I've seen multiple people pushed out by increasing rent prices, partially because the current cap of 14.6% is far too high to be sustainable. Landlords already have an incredible amount of sway in this state (which is I'm guessing how they got the cap increased to 14.6% year over year in the first place), and it's time that we put at least a small amount of power back into the hands of tenants. Additionally, I'm sure you've all seen articles or have personal experience involving the homelessness epidemic affecting Portland and other cities in Oregon. The first step in tackling this problem is affordable housing, which simply isn't possible with the current rent cap. Most of our new constructions are also 'luxury lofts' or updated apartments that don't make enough space for affordable housing. Having the current limit set at 15 years without rent cap for new constructions allows them to increase their rents with impunity for high income newcomers to the state. As a result, this also pushes general rents up higher and higher even outside of those newer developments.

By providing affordable housing to Oregonians with this bill, we can set ourselves up to start recovering as a state from the last few years of hardship. Once people have access to safe and affordable housing all measurable metrics improve in a society. We would see lower rates of drug usage, crime, and homelessness once people are not rent burdened (something that is almost encouraged by current policies). Furthermore, I'll put my soapbox away soon, but do we want a state ruled by landlords and property management companies? Funneling more funds towards those groups does not actually spur economic stimulus nor does it improve the quality of life for the average Oregonian. I call on you to help support tenants by passing SB611 so that we can begin stabilizing as a state.

Have a nice weekend,
Henry Scheffer