



SO Health-E

Advocating for Health Equity

March 23, 2023

Re: Support for SB 611 to address Oregon’s statewide housing affordability crisis

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

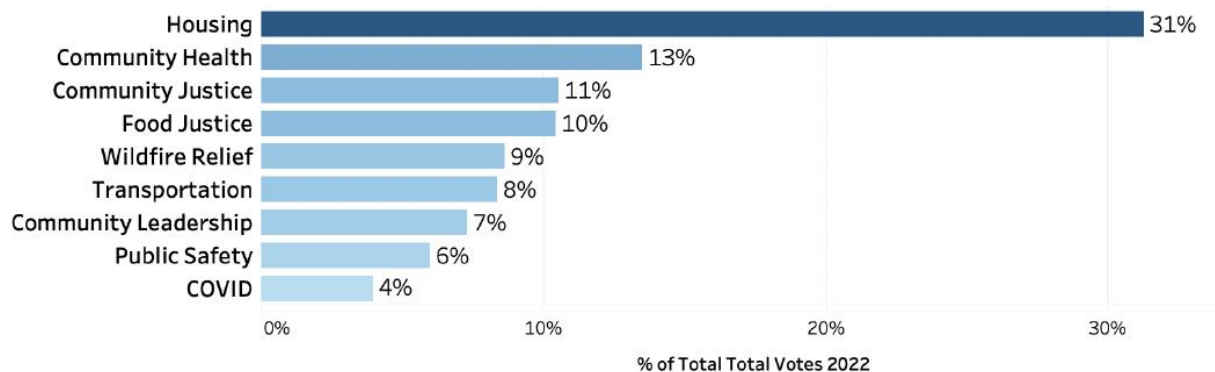
SB 611 is needed now to address the #1 concern for Southern Oregon communities: housing affordability. That’s why SO Health-E, the Southern Oregon Regional Health Equity Coalition (RHEC) serving Jackson and Josephine Counties urges strong support and swift action to pass Senate Bill 611.

In 2022, SO Health-E did a community priorities survey of residents in Jackson and Josephine Counties, prioritizing the voices of people of color, wildfire survivors, LGBTQ+ people, Spanish speaking households with children, people living with a disability, students, and low-income people.

The #1 issue that community members prioritized was housing. Specifically, we heard a lot about housing affordability and the reality that 14.6% rent increases, as were legal in 2023 for properties 15 or more years old, was too high for anyone to afford, outpacing wages and Social Security. After the Almeda fire, reports of extreme increases such as 32%, 47%, 50% are becoming more common in our community. When people have to vacate due to no fault of their own, Oregon’s tight and expensive rental market makes it hard to quickly find a new home.

Total Votes by Category.

Housing was voted by survey participants as their #1 priority.



Families in our region can't wait. The important elements in this bill are needed now to stabilize families and communities in Southern Oregon and across the state, including:

- Limit rent increases to 3% + inflation with maximum increase of 8% during a calendar year.
- Narrow the loophole, applying rent stabilization to buildings older than 3 years, which increases the number of people protected while exempting new construction.
- Increase relocation assistance to three-months' rent to help tenants displaced through no fault of their own avoid homelessness. Landlords with four units or less are exempt from this provision.
- Set no limits on rent resets between tenants.

Our community has been in a housing crisis for years, which was made worse by wildfires in 2020. We are pleased to see that **SB 622 addresses the affordability crisis** that renting Oregon households face.

Please pass SB 611 out of committee with do pass recommendation as swiftly as possible. Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Glass". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michelle Glass
Policy and Advocacy Coordinator,
SO Health-E, the Regional Health Equity Coalition serving Jackson and Josephine Counties