



Date: March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023  
To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
From: Jennifer Parrish Taylor, Director of Advocacy and Public Policy for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Support to Reduce Evictions and Prevent Homelessness, SB 611

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Parrish Taylor, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington. We strongly urge you to pass SB 611 as a critical homelessness prevention strategy, to protect seniors, families, individuals and communities across the state from extreme rent increases and displacement.

Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and they already pay the ninth highest rent in the nation. BIPOC Oregonians are more likely to be renters because of systemic barriers to housing and employment. We know that evictions and rent hikes create disproportionate harm to BIPOC communities and Black women in Oregon are twice as likely to face eviction; on average, landlords filed evictions against Black women renters at double the rate of or higher than their white renters in Oregon and in 16 other states, according to the ACLU's Women's Rights Project and Data Analytics team. We must also look at ways to keep currently housed Oregonians in their homes. Rent for a Portland one-bedroom apartment has risen by 34% since last year. The eviction court filings due to non-payment of rent has also increased to 68% from last year's 48%. A reasonable rent limit will help prevent high-rent home loss and prevent our state's homeless crisis from getting worse just as we are all pulling together to treat it as the emergency that it is.

The statewide stories of massive rent increases in communities large and small show that we have a rent crisis that must be addressed. Whether these increases are hitting entire buildings or mobile home parks or individuals, each and every one puts people at risk of displacement and homelessness. The legislature did the right thing in passing the first rent limit in 2019 but as we have all learned now, the limit did not account for runaway inflation. Studies show that just a \$100 increase in median rents in a community is tied to a 9% increase in homelessness in that community. At a time when Oregon is experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation, we cannot afford to let rent spikes go unchecked. SB 611 is an action that the legislature can take now to have an immediate impact on our state's housing crisis as we also work on the longer term solutions of increasing supply and providing support to rehouse our currently homeless neighbors.

Here is the problem we are facing. Under current law:

- 2023 rent increases for properties older than 15 years is 14.6%. That is too high for anyone to afford, outpacing wages and Social Security, and will result in increased high-rent evictions.
- There are no limits for building 15 years or newer. Reports of extreme increases such as 32%, 47%, 50% are becoming more common.



- 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.

SB 611 helps ensure that the action lawmakers took during the pandemic to reduce evictions and keep people safe and stable in their homes are continued and strengthened; the legislation would do the following:

- 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.

We know these extreme rent increases are not isolated incidents. There are so many that the results are playing out in eviction court and in media headlines. More than 86% of all eviction filings are due to unaffordable rent. This reasonable proposal prevents extreme rent increases and displacements, while allowing landlords to take inflation into account and preserving the ability to reset rents to market rates in between tenancies.

Oregon's housing emergency goes beyond lack of supply and the number of people living without homes or shelter. We have a rental emergency as well, with tenants living just one rent increase notice away from displacement and possible homelessness. Without SB 611 to stop runaway and extreme rent increases, we will continue to see people displaced onto the streets more quickly than we can rehouse people. Without passage of SB 611, Oregon's success in addressing the housing crisis is at grave risk.

Please pass SB 611 as soon as possible. Thank you,

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