

Submitter: Benjamin Platt
On Behalf Of: SB 611
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 Benjamin Platt of Portland, and today I'm testifying as a renter in support of SB 611. This bill addresses the critical need for rental stability in our state. This proposal will provide much-needed relief to renters who are struggling to make ends meet in the face of rising rents, limited resources, and an overall volatile economy. It will limit annual rent increases to 3% plus CPI or 8% whichever is lower, provide protections for all buildings over three years-old, and increase relocation assistance in no-fault evictions.

This bill's proposed annual rent increase limit of 3% plus CPI is not enough to stabilize rents on its own, but it's far better than the current rent caps that allow for an absolutely unacceptable 14.6% rent increase this year. SB 611's proposed 8% maximum annual rent increase would still result in rent doubling every nine years, a thought that makes me fear for my family's long term ability to put down the kind of roots we want in our city, but that's better than the path we are currently on, which will see my family having to make hard choices about potentially relocating yet again in only one or two years time. Our rent continues to rise in spite of the fact that our residence remains practically unmodified and unimproved since the late-90's, when average rents were almost a third what they are in Portland today. My family is lucky though - we have the benefit of time to try and make something work, to endure personal and financial hardships to make the budget work how we need it to in pursuit of stable housing. Not everyone has that same privilege, including other families, seniors, and low-income renters across the state.

Before my family moved to Oregon, we lived in Eastern Idaho, in Teton County, where we experienced for ourselves the cost of skyrocketing rents on a community and on individual households. In Teton County, rapidly increasing rents across the region have destabilized the entire workforce as hundreds of wage laborers have been forced to give up not only their dreams of owning a home, but of even having a stable place to live for longer than three months at a time. Many were forced to go without a house, my family included, supporting themselves as best as they could amidst increasingly harsh weather conditions, low wages, and the thousands of constant stressors that come with being unhoused. If one wanted to remain housed and employed, as my family did, you'd have to move to a small town on the edge of the county while driving at least an hour away in pursuit of higher wages, spreading the housing crisis further and further through the area. These smaller towns were

buckling under the pressure of this displaced workforce and by the time our rent was raised one final time, well beyond our ability to possibly remain where we were and forcing my family to uproot and return to Oregon, the towns of Teton County were barely able to keep food on the shelves of grocery stores, small businesses were folding left and right for lack of workers, and my friends and neighbors were making tearful, bitter goodbyes to a place they thought they could call home. On the day we moved out, tens of other families just from our apartment complex were loading up their cars alongside us, dispersing across the country and saying goodbye to their friends, neighbors, and memories as they cut their losses and moved on to try and make a home somewhere that would better support them.

My family returned to Oregon, and although Oregon is not in the same position as Teton County, that is the only situation where out of control housing leads: the slow death of a community and its people. We must ensure that all Oregonians have access to safe, stable, and affordable housing. Housing is a human right, so I urge our legislators to support SB 611 and provide much-needed renter relief. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Benjamin Platt