



March 27, 2023

To: Senate Housing Committee
From: Our Children Oregon, The Children's Agenda
RE: Support of SB 611

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

Our Children Oregon (OCO) is a statewide organization that advances equitable policies, data and research, and whole-child advocacy. The Children's Agenda, convened by OCO, brings together ~130 organizations statewide to create a holistic legislative agenda dedicated to improving the well-being of Oregon's children, youth, and families. Our collective created a 2023 legislative agenda that focuses on community-driven solutions to provide access and opportunities for all children and families. We strongly urge you to pass SB 611 as a critical homelessness prevention strategy, to protect children, seniors, families, individuals and communities across the state from extreme rent increases and displacement.

A safe and stable place to call home is a basic human need. Every Oregonian should have access to a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home and be protected from extreme rent increases. Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes, and after making the rent payment, more than 50% of them don't have enough money to cover basic necessities like food, child care, or health care.¹ Despite this reality, there has already been a 14.6% rent increase this year for older buildings and unlimited increases for newer buildings.² These rent increases directly lead to increased eviction rates, putting children and their families at an increased risk for homelessness.

Oregon already has one of the highest rates of homelessness in the country. Youths who are in foster care, who identify as LGBTQ+, and/or are youth of color, especially Black, Latinx, and/or Indigenous, are especially at risk of being homeless. Over 21,000 Oregon students experienced homelessness during the 2019-2020 school year.³ These students' circumstances put them at an incredible disadvantage through no fault of their own. They are unable to adequately study, adequately learn, and wholly engage in their education. These students who experience homelessness are 27% less likely to graduate from high school than housed students.

¹ <https://www.stablehomesor.org/>

² <https://www.stablehomesor.org/>

³ <https://ourchildrenoregon.org/publications/oregon-kids-count/>

Stable housing is essential for the development, growth, and health of children and youth.

Rising rents and instability affect the entire family and can cause lifelong and multigenerational consequences. SB 611 is an immediate action that the legislature can take now to have a direct impact on our state's housing crisis. SB 611 specifically tackles loopholes for extreme inflation and provides renters with the financial support they need when facing eviction. SB 611 will:

- 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.

Supporting renters by reducing rent increases is an important step to respond to our housing and homelessness crisis. We appreciate the efforts and commitment of Oregon leaders to increase the housing supply and rehousing our homeless neighbors, but we must also ensure that the people who are housed today don't end up on the streets themselves.

We thank you for your time and efforts to improve child well-being across the state. We urge your support of SB 611 to prevent eviction and displacement, ensuring stable homes for Oregon's children and families.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Ivy Major-McDowall
Policy and Advocacy Director

View the 2023 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2023-childrens-agenda