

Submitter: Tara Garkow

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB611

Dear Senate Housing Committee,

I've spent the last 4+ years working for Lane County's housing agency, providing case management to low-income families. Before that I worked at Laurel Hill Center, a local mental health organization, as a housing navigator helping low-income folks with severe & persistent mental illnesses find housing. I write you today in support of Senate Bill 611 and urge you to pass this bill as a way of protecting renters across Oregon, including myself and the families I serve.

In my work helping low-income families find and maintain long-term housing, I've personally seen how poorly these folks are treated by landlords and housing providers in our community. Over the years, I've worked with countless families that have received no-cause evictions and I've witnessed the severe impact that these no-cause evictions have on low-income individuals and families in a market like ours where affordable housing options are scarce, and a single no-cause eviction is a precursor for homelessness.

There are fifty families on my caseload, three of which are currently living in cars and tents after receiving no-cause evictions. I have no doubt that they would all be stably housed right now had they received relocation assistance to help with immediate moving costs like application fees and security deposits (especially when you consider that Oregon landlords legally have 30 days to refund a security deposit after a tenant vacates a unit). Unfortunately for one of these families, their lack of housing led to a loss of employment, which has them now in an even scarier situation.

These three families were displaced due to no fault of their own – they were not “problem tenants” nor did they violate their lease in any way. Opponents of tenant protections fear they will lose their right to evict “bad tenants” if SB 611 passes, but this bill DOES NOT apply to for-cause evictions. It only applies to no-cause evictions because they are a primary contributor to homelessness in our community and causing real harm in our neighborhoods. I ask you with the utmost urgency to please pass this bill today.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.