

Submitter: Ethan Klein

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB611

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 611. My name is Ethan Klein and I am a case manager at Senior & Disability Services—a division of Lane Council of Governments. I 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.

Particular to my field of work, I speak with clients who struggle to pay their bill on a fixed income—whether that's income through Supplemental Security Income or Social Security Disability Insurance. The end of the emergency allotment for SNAP has already left the majority of my clients scrambling to afford groceries in their fixed incomes. These are individuals who are not able to work and do not have the savings or monetary connections from family to afford the most basic necessities such as groceries. Now, these same clients are staring down a rent increase of 14.6%. While some live in fixed-income housing (which is still in very short supply), the majority of my clients live in housing that would be subject to a 14.6% rent increase. This rent increase WILL leave many of clients without a home if more thorough rent stabilization measures such as SB 611 are not put in place. Most of my clients' LIMITED income already goes to rent and increasing the rent on our most vulnerable populations is simply unconscionable in a state where it's becoming increasingly more expensive to find affordable housing. Our elected officials ask how to solve people like my elderly and disabled clients from winding up on the streets—places where they are statistically more likely to endure harm, sickness, and death due to exposure from the elements. SB 611 will prevent just that! It will serve as a preventative measure to homelessness before my elderly and disabled clients are forced out onto the streets because they can no longer afford rent on their fixed incomes.

Four in 10 Oregonians rent their homes and they already pay the ninth highest rent in the nation. 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. 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. We also know 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.

Sincerely,  
Ethan Klein