



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

March 28, 2023

Thank you Chair Jama and members of the Senate Committee On Housing and Development. My name is Farrah Chaichi and I am the Representative from House District 35, which includes Beaverton and Aloha.

I am submitting testimony today to urge you to pass Senate Bill 611. Housing affordability is without a doubt the most immense challenge facing our state. It is also the most important problem facing my community. The price of housing, and particularly the cost of rent, has been increasing in our state faster than wages and incomes for many years.

I am constantly hearing from constituents who are struggling to afford housing and facing eviction. Rampant homelessness is becoming prevalent even in my largely suburban district. I'm sure you're hearing this as well. Personally, just a few years ago I was priced out of my own apartment in central Beaverton due to a more than 20% rent increase. No one is immune from this housing crisis.

Although work is being done to expand the supply of housing, those efforts won't result in lowering the cost of rent as long as landlords can set their prices at whatever makes them the most profits. We can and must do more for our neighbors that are housing cost burdened and facing homelessness. Housing is a vital human necessity and a human right we are failing to protect.

In Washington County, where I live, we have about 244,000 people living in rental housing. More than 25% of those renters paid at least half of their income on rent alone. To say that another way, just in the county that I live in, more than 60,000 people were severely burdened by the cost of rent, according to a [2016 white paper published by the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department](#). In 2014 the mean wage was \$20.82/hr and the wage to afford HUD Fair Market Rent of a 2 bedroom apartment was \$23.88. That would take 93 hours per week at minimum wage to afford a 2 bedroom apartment.

In a [2020 white paper published by the Oregon Housing Alliance](#), those figures in Washington County have remained about the same, with 1 in 4 renters being severely burdened by the cost of

rent. In that same study, it showed that more than 2,700 school children in Washington County experienced homelessness that year.

But this is by no means a problem that is limited to Washington County. Statewide, increases in the cost of rent have far outpaced increases in incomes for the last decade. Currently, the cost of rent is set by landlords to ensure maximal profits. It is not set at a cost that ensures everyone in the community is housed and unburdened by housing costs. While some landlords are willing to sacrifice profits to keep rent affordable, this is not the norm.

The base bill for SB 611 is an opportunity to answer the call for housing reform and make a significant change in the lives of many thousands of Oregonians. In setting a more reasonable cap for rent increases, increasing the cost of landlord-caused evictions, and expanding the scope of the housing units these regulations will apply to, SB 611 will have an immediate impact on our state's housing crisis. I urge you to take this action to protect seniors, families, individuals, and communities across the state from extreme rent increases, displacement, and homelessness which disproportionately affect BIPOC, migrant, and other marginalized communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Representative Chaichi
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