

In Support of House Bill 3503

The math is simple enough. Inflation is pushing costs for essentials like food past the current allowed rent increase of 14.6 percent. Nearly all goods and services have seen double-digit increases in percentage of pricing since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. Oregonians have not seen a wage increase to match these financial setbacks, and we are seeing record numbers of homeless, month over month. Too many families and too many children are being forced onto the streets by a housing market run amuck.

Where can one cut back on costs? Gas is not going down in price. Food costs are skyrocketing. My personal SNAP (Food Stamp) benefits have been cut back by 53 Percent. I am not sure now, how to navigate the loss of food stamps, along with the continual rise in prime rates, and banking and credit card fees. I guess I am one of the lucky ones, a disabled single male – age 67, living in subsidized housing, on a section 8 voucher which took over 8 years of applying to finally receive, and drawing social security retirement of \$1004.00/month.

I understand that landlords don't want to be dictated to in terms of what they may want to charge for rent. I understand that they too, face rising costs, and rising interest rates. However, most landlords in Oregon and in general are able to navigate this financial crisis better than the person on the street. If the landlords, their associations, and their lobbyists continue to dictate housing and land economics; we will have created a whole new class of the 'ultra-poor'. These will be the houseless people with no chance-in-hell of ever getting off the streets, let alone back into the workforce, and able to recover their financial and material losses.

There has to be a 'middle ground' which I believe House Bill 3503 is addressing. Essentially, if landlords continue to lobby, and to influence rental prices, Oregon's financial standing will not just falter, it will fail. The housing market is in dire need of mediation, which I feel is the intent of House Bill 3503.

Oregon's rent average is the 9th highest in the nation, and communities of color, along with the working poor bear the brunt of this housing crisis. These citizens are in desperate need of relief. There seems to be no end in sight of the sadness playing out on the nightly news about more homelessness, more ideas, but not enough money for homeless encampments. You may or may not know that Portland, OR had its own 'Hooverville' camps all along the Willamette River, Sullivan's Gulch, and other areas during the aftermath of the Great Depression circa 1931. The homeless on our downtown streets don't seem much different to me than those old B/W photos.

You have a sworn duty as legislators to promise to follow the constitution of the United States and the constitution of the State of Oregon, to the best of your abilities. I believe this includes caring for fellow citizens and enacting laws to prevent homelessness. You may live in a different financial realm than the working poor, yet this does not exempt you from doing the best you can to help fellow Oregonians.

Please support House Bill 3503.

Sincerely,

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