

Submitter: Travis Noddings

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2305

Opposing HB2305, which will worsen our homelessness and eviction crisis

Oregon is in a severe downward spiral when it comes to homelessness, rent prices, and evictions. Since 2019, the average monthly number of eviction filings in Oregon has risen from 1,500 to over 2,300[1]. In the last year alone, annual eviction filings increased over 20% from the year prior[2]. Nearly 90% of all evictions are due to late rent – and the reason is clear. While median rent went up 40% between 2021 and 2022, median wages increased by only 13%, less than ? the amount required to keep pace with rent [1].

Oregon has one of the worst rates of renter cost-burden in the entire nation [3]. More than half of all renters pay more than 30% of their income to rent, and 25% of all renters pay more than half of their income to rent. I've spoken with thousands of renters in Portland over the last year, and many of them described skipping meals, doctors visits, utility bills, car repairs, and essential purchases in order to keep up with their rent costs.

I've worked as a housing case manager at Cascade AIDS Project (CAP), an eviction defense paralegal at The Commons Law Center, and now as a tenant organizer at Community Alliance of Tenants. In each role, the barriers to housing have been the same: even the cheapest housing in our region is too expensive for a large portion of working households [4]. At CAP, I often worked with newly homeless seniors receiving SSI or SSDI benefits who were priced out of their homes and could no longer find a place to live that they could afford on their fixed-income. This is the reason that the fastest growing demographic of homeless in the nation is seniors over the age of 55, with the total number already expected to triple by 2030 [5]. At the Commons Law Center I worked in eviction court serving low-income tenants facing eviction over late payment of rent – with time and resources like rent assistance, most demonstrated a desire and ability to pay what they owe in order to keep their housing. HB2305 would doom these tenants to homelessness even when they are able to make up the late rent owed to their landlord.

Currently, Oregon has the highest rate of unsheltered homelessness in the nation [6], with nearly 2/3rds of all unhoused Oregonians living unsheltered outside in Multnomah County and many other Oregon counties [7]. Annual “domicile unknown” deaths in Multnomah county have risen to a staggering ~450 [8], nearly 4x higher than the 113 that died in 2019, and nearly 10x higher than the 47 that died in 2011 – the earliest year for which we have a record [9]. The primary pipeline into new

homelessness is eviction, and we are increasingly setting up those forced into homelessness for death on our streets.

This crisis is solvable. More rent assistance resources are needed to keep renters housed. Policies focused on allowing renters to cure late rent payments and violations are what will ease the burden and slow the rapid growth of homelessness in our state. Addressing the unattainably high cost of rent is the only permanent solution to our housing emergency. Landlords are not suffering, renters are. We must do right by them.

Please vote in opposition to HB2305, and prevent further cruelty and harm to the many renters trying to stay housed.

[1] opb.org/article/2025/01/29/oregon-housing-renters-land-lords-politics-homelessness-rent-renters-eviction/

[2] evictedinoregon.com/eviction-filings

[3] koin.com/local/oregon-among-states-with-most-cost-burdened-renters-study/

[4] nlihc.org/gap/state/or

[5] endhomelessness.org/blog/paint-by-numbers-older-americans-and-homelessness/

[6] axios.com/local/portland/2024/12/06/homeless-families-children-shelter-women

[7] streetroots.org/news/2024/02/14/new-report-expands-county-homelessness-data

[8]

multco.us/file/domicile_unknown_report%3A_analyzing_deaths_in_2023/download

[9]

multco.us/file/domicile_unknown_report%3A_analyzing_deaths_in_2021/download