



March 12th, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St NE Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for SB 722

Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson and Members of the committee

My name is Kim McCarty and I am the Executive Director of Community Alliance of Tenants, Oregon's only statewide tenants' rights organization. I submit this testimony on behalf of the thousands of renters we support through our hotline, workshops, and direct advocacy.

We strongly urge you to support SB 722, a critical bill that will protect more Oregon tenants from predatory rent increases and the devastating consequences of displacement. Our state has been in a housing crisis for well over a decade now. Oregon has some of the most cost-burdened renters in the entire country. The cost of housing is directly correlated with record-setting number of evictions and homelessness and displacement. But for this testimony I want you to remember why Oregon needed rent stabilization for everyone. To do that I will take you back in time with me for a moment to the last time this body convened to debate rent stabilization. SB 722 would provide relief to renters that is needed now more than ever.

A woman named Jessica Israel came to this body for the first time to share her story. Her and her family had been priced out of Portland, so they found a 3-bedroom apartment 30 minutes outside of the city that they could afford in 2022 with their toddler. A year later, they were asked to foot a more than 30% increase to their rent, totaling to about \$7,000 in additional fees a year.

Faced with a massive rent hike, pushed to the edges of the metro area Jessica asked: where else can I go next?

Jessica had recently been diagnosed with cancer, and her husband's ability to work had been impeded due to a permanent back injury he sustained during COVID as an essential worker. And with a young child in tow, the answer to that question was getting increasingly slimmer for her and her family.

Jessica testified before this body that year, asking our representatives to strengthen our rent stabilization law to protect her and her family. And while the legislature, did pass some needed protections that session, the loopholes remained in place.

That meant Jessica, and her family were forced to leave not just her new apartment, but the state.

When asked by local news stations about the massive hike, the property management company at her complex, the Cannery Row Apartments said they were just keeping up with market rates. Unfortunately they are right. Predatory hikes are common in this market, leaving more and more people with nowhere to go in our state, but the streets. This is high-rent homelessness.

Researching Cannery Row, we found how deeply the problem ran from several online Cannery Row tenant complaints. One former tenant spoke of the 30% increase they and other tenants received, writing in a Google review: "Please re-think your decision of moving here as when this new company

COMMUNITY ALLIANCE OF TENANTS, P.O. Box 11176. PORTLAND, OR 97211 503-460-9702
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took over it pushed out over half of the residents that had lived here for years, myself included.” Their comments included that the company is using AI price fixing to set the rents, an increasingly and alarmingly more common practice.

Cannery Row is not unique. Rent hikes of 15%, 30%, 50% and even 100% have been documented in our region in the past decade. This is unacceptable and common.

Researchers from Portland State University said during the pandemic that 125,000 Oregonians would be on the brink of eviction when pandemic-era protections ended.

I said earlier that we are seeing the highest levels of evictions ever in our state’s history. With annual double digit rent increases, over 2000 households evicted monthly, and few affordable options, we need solutions to address the emergency today and while also planning for the future.

This is why, asking working people, oftentimes to work more, to pay more with less left in our pockets cannot continue to be the Oregon way.

This is why at the end of this year, we will be re-declaring a Renters’ State of Emergency to mark the 10-year anniversary of us identifying this crisis.

Last summer we put a limit on annual rent increases, but loopholes in the law left far too many Oregonians subject to the predatory rental market.

We urge you to vote in favor of SB 722. Closing the 15-year loophole is one of the least things we could do right now to bring costs down for communities across Oregon.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians. Please reach out if you want further dialog about these issues.

Sincerely,

Kim McCarty
Community Alliance of Tenants
kmccarty@oregoncat.org