

Re: Support for SB 722

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Seth Johnstone and I work for Basic Rights Oregon and I am writing to share our organizations strong support of SB 722, which will help prevent displacement and extreme rent spikes by extending coverage of our state's rent stabilization statutes, and prohibiting the use of price-fixing software to inflate rents.

From our strategic planning statewide tour to weekly calls we receive from the LGBTQIA2S+ community sharing that they need housing support and eviction prevention resources, housing was one of our top priorities for this session. LGBTQ+ individuals are significantly more likely to experience housing instability and houselessness than their non-LGBTQ peers. Due to systemic oppression and discrimination, our community remains in need of affordable housing. There is new construction but if its exempt and utilizing AI technology to set rates high, it will remain inaccessible to those who need it.

SB 722 would provide immediate and measurable protection for Oregonians suffering due to rent spikes as a result of our state's affordable housing crisis. Buildings 15 years or newer exempt from rent stabilization leaves so many residents at risk for extreme hikes and many individuals cannot afford unanticipated displacement, moving fees, and costs that come with consistently changing space.

The bill reduces the current 15 year exemption for new construction from our statewide rent stabilization statute. This change would provide reasonable rent stabilization protection for an additional 40,000 housing units and between 80,000 to 100,000 Oregonians. This proposed change strikes a balance between continuing to encourage new units to come into the market and ensuring that those units do not contribute to long-term gentrification and price inflation.

The bill also amends the Landlord-Tenant Act to prohibit the use of price-fixing AI software to artificially inflate rents. These kinds of products are the subject of [national attention](#) and concern, and Oregon has joined a federal lawsuit against this practice. Many local jurisdictions are taking steps to curtail this practice. Price fixing has no place in Oregon, and we cannot afford to allow this practice to exacerbate our housing crisis.

Our organization's mission is to achieve legal and lived equality for LGBTQIA2S+ Oregonians and housing stability for our community is vital. For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.