



PRESS RELEASE

OREGON HOUSE DEMOCRATS

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Landmark Housing Legislation Passes Oregon House *Senate Bill 608 is a first-in-the-nation law to protect renters*

SALEM – Landmark, first-in-the-nation legislation to protect renters from rent gouging and no-cause evictions passed the Oregon House of Representatives on Tuesday. Senate Bill 608 creates a fairer system that will provide predictability and stability to renters throughout the state, while not discouraging new construction.

Rep. Mark Meek (D-Oregon City), a realtor and property manager, carried the legislation on the floor. He told the story of his own experiences as a child dealing with housing instability.

“I have lived both sides of this issue,” Rep. Meek said. “I’ve experienced homelessness and extreme hunger. I remember couch surfing throughout the Los Angeles-area with my mother after being evicted from our apartment. We’d sleep in a motel, when we could afford them, and when we couldn’t, we’d sleep in our car.”

“My story is one example of what displacement looks like. Displacement is devastating. It stifles a child’s ability to be successful. It is no small miracle that I am standing here before this esteemed body today.”

Senate Bill 608 will establish a statewide limit on rent increases, keeping them to no more than 7 percent plus the consumer price index during a 12-month period. It would also ban no-cause evictions following the first 12 months of occupancy.

Senate Bill 608 builds on years of work to address Oregon’s housing crisis, including a law passed in 2017 that prohibits rent increases in the first year of month-to-month tenancy and requires that landlords provide 90-day notice of rent increases.

“I am a landlord and will remain one after this bill becomes law,” Meek added. “Becoming a property manager in Oregon is a great investment and providing fair protection to renters with Senate Bill 608 does not change that.”

The non-partisan Office of Economic Analysis said in a memo last week that the regulations instituted by Senate Bill 608 will not negatively impact new housing supply.

Rep. Tiffany Mitchell (D-Astoria) spoke Tuesday about the need for protections in rural communities throughout Oregon. In recent years, rents statewide have increased by 14 percent,

and in towns like Talent, Oregon, one in three residents is spending more than half of their income on housing.

“As someone who has spent the last year talking to countless rural Oregonian tenants about the stress they face every day from a rental market in crises, I know how critical this legislation is towards helping them find the stability they deserve,” Rep. Mitchell said.

Rep. Tawna Sanchez (D-Portland) stressed how important the legislation is for protecting the most vulnerable and underserved Oregonians.

“In every corner of Oregon, individuals are facing an emergency,” Rep. Sanchez said. “From women fleeing domestic violence, to working families in communities big and small trying to get by, to indigenous people who struggle to find a safe and secure home, this crisis touches all of us.”

Oregon House Democrats continue to work to ensure more Oregonians have access to an affordable, stable place to call home. This legislation is an important and significant step forward, and it is one part of a broad range of solutions needed to address this statewide crisis.

Senate Bill 608 passed the Oregon House of Representatives by a 35-25 margin. This legislation now goes to Gov. Kate Brown.

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