



**Testimony of Ricardo Lujan-Valerio, Policy Associate
In Support of SB 608
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
February 18, 2019**

Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ supports SB 608, which would prohibit no-cause eviction of tenants in Oregon after 12 months of occupancy. SB 608 is an important bill to prevent housing discrimination, promote equity in housing, and protect renters' rights to individually and collectively advocate for better living conditions.

As an organization with a long history of fighting for civil rights in housing, we believe SB 608 is crucial to protecting Oregonians from housing discrimination. "No-cause" or "No-fault" evictions hide housing discrimination because landlords are not required to provide a justification when ending a tenancy. This means that, despite Oregon having anti-discrimination laws pertaining to housing, tenants are often unable to provide verifiable evidence of discrimination when it occurs. By creating a reasonable, just-cause eviction standard and prescribing transparency, SB 608 will give tenants the opportunity to understand why an eviction is occurring, along with a mechanism for accountability against discriminatory evictions.

SB 608 is crucial to promoting a more equitable Oregon for marginalized communities. Evictions without cause perpetuate social and economic inequalities and disproportionately affect communities of color, people with disabilities, female-headed households with children, and other protected classes.² No-cause evictions followed by dramatic rent increases are also a frequent mechanism for rapid gentrification, breaking up and displacing communities of color. SB 608 will provide urgently-needed relief from these problems by prohibiting no-cause eviction.

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 45,000 members and supporters statewide.

² Eviction: The Hidden Housing Problem.

<https://www.innovations.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/10950.pdf>; State of Oregon Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing, <https://www.oregon.gov/ohcs/DO/docs/2016-2020-Oregon-Analysis-of-Impediments-Fair-Housing-Choice-Report.pdf>.

SB 608 will give Oregon renters the protections they need to individually and collectively advocate for better living conditions. Many tenants are afraid of retaliatory behavior, so they choose not to report maintenance issues or file complaints against their landlords. Tenants similarly feel fearful of organizing with other tenants and collectively advocating for change. These fears have been amplified by the financial hardships faced by many Oregonians and compounded by the state's housing crisis. SB 608 will give these renters the assurance that they can advocate for change without fear of losing their homes.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 608. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.