February 28, 2019

The Honorable Peter Courtney  The Honorable Tina Kotek
President of the Senate  Speaker of the House
S-201 State Capitol  H-269 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301  Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 608

Dear President Courtney and Speaker Kotek:

Today I am signing Senate Bill 608, which protects tenants from no-cause evictions, and limits rent increases. I write this letter to clarify my intent on a few points.

First, Senate Bill 608 neither adds to nor subtracts from existing state-law preemption of local laws. The bill does not alter ORS 91.225, which continues to preempt local ordinances that directly control rents. Likewise, the bill does not prohibit cities and counties from enacting other policies that are permissible under existing state laws, as interpreted by the courts. The Legislature intended to maintain the current balance between state and local authorities on these issues, as evidenced by its rejection of proposed amendments to Senate Bill 608 that would have changed the rules governing preemption. In signing Senate Bill 608, that is my intent as well.

Second, it is my intention that the obligations set forth in Senate Bill 608 be harmonized with those imposed by local jurisdictions, whenever possible. For example, in circumstances in which a landlord terminating a tenancy is obligated to pay relocation assistance under a city ordinance and one-month’s rent under Senate Bill 608, payment of the higher amount would satisfy the landlord’s relocation assistance obligation under state and local law.

Third, I encourage the Legislature to fund a study examining the effects of Senate Bill 608, so Oregon can continue to lead and innovate on these important issues.

Most importantly, although passage of Senate Bill 608 is a notable achievement, our work is not yet done. We must provide resources to educate and train Oregonians regarding this law, and to increase the supply of homes across the housing spectrum.
My budget includes a historic $400 million in state investments to address these challenges. The investments are focused around four strategies that, among other things, invest in permanent supportive housing and accelerate the growth of housing supply in greater Oregon. I look forward to working with the Legislature to fund these critical investments.

Sincerely,

Kate Brown

Governor Kate Brown

KB:smg