



OFFICE OF MAYOR TED WHEELER
CITY OF PORTLAND

January 19, 2018

Valued Members of the Rental Relocation Assistance Technical Advisory Committee,

I want to thank you for your commitment to this process and the expertise you have provided over these last few months. I am proud of the work we have accomplished, given the limited tools and data available, to provide more stability for renters. I appreciate the work that you have done to improve and make permanent the original Relocation Ordinance, which was one of Council's first major accomplishments during my administration.

While most of the limited changes to the Ordinance have been drafted, there are two outstanding issues within the permanent relocation ordinance on which I will be providing direction to PHB staff: the one-unit exemption, and hardship waivers.

I have heard from members of this Committee, as well as other stakeholders, including Commissioner Eudaly, that Council should remove the one-unit exemption. Many good thoughts have been offered. I have also heard concern about the effect that removing the exemption would have on the market and on Portland landlords that only have one unit.

But assumptions don't necessarily make good policy. Rather good data help to inform the creation of good policy. Consequently, I have instructed PHB to refrain from amending the one-unit exemption at this time. I recognize this decision will be disappointing to many members of this committee, but I want to be clear: I am not philosophically opposed to ending the one unit exemption, and I am committed to revisiting this issue once we have compiled quality data.

To that end, I support the creation of the Rental Registration System, which will provide us with quality data to help us better understanding of what specific steps are appropriate for our housing market, and a better sense of the consequences – both intended and unintended – of our policy choices. The creation of a Rental Registration System is a huge win for tenants and should be celebrated.

Further, to ensure the single-unit exemption is being used in the spirit in which it was intended, I have instructed PHB to add a requirement that owners certify they have ownership interest in only one unit, with a financial penalty for providing a false certification. Further, the one-unit exemption should apply based on the number of units owned by a landlord, rather than how many are occupied.

Similarly, I would like to see more data before I can support a hardship exemption in lieu of a unit-based exemption. I believe it is critical that we take a deeper dive into the administrative costs of such an exemption, and to weigh the potential impact of those costs on the delivery of services promised through the Office of Rental Services, given the limited resources available.

I have asked PHB to reschedule the final meeting of the Rental Relocation Assistance Technical Advisory Committee prior to Council action on the Relocation Ordinance. I plan on attending in person so I can listen to additional feedback and continue this important conversation.

Thank you again for your hard work on behalf of all of us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ted Wheeler', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Ted Wheeler
Mayor, City of Portland