



# Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

2/6/24

RE: HB 262 - Letter of Support

To Members of the 33rd Alaska State Legislature,

The Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (AKCH2) supports HB 262, an act that will increase the notification time for rent increases. For over a decade AKCH2 has advocated for improving the lives of people experiencing homelessness through housing and supportive services. Data is collected by housing providers to fully understand the scope of homelessness in Alaska, including information about how people become homeless. The one thing that all people experiencing homelessness have in common, is that at some point they were housed. AKCH2 and partners seek to reduce the number of people who become homeless through rental assistance programs, temporary assistance with utilities and advocating for policies that protect renters.

The data is also reported to the Department of Housing and Urban Development during an annual application for funding of housing and housing services. This year, the AKCH2 Continuum of Care program saw an increase of over 20% in HUD funding in part because of the high quality of data and the performance of housing providers in Alaska. The total amount was over \$2 million for the first time, and indicates that coalition members are following federal guidelines and succeeding at moving people from shelters and temporary housing into permanent destinations.

While our state's housing providers demonstrate successful outcomes when housing vulnerable Alaskans, they are not resourced to meet the needs from an increase in homelessness. **Policies like HB 262 will reduce the inflow into homelessness.** Families and individuals who are low income or extremely low income often have difficulty paying their monthly rent. When rent is increased, or another unexpected financial burden occurs, people have to make the difficult decision to move to a shelter, stay with family or friends, or sleep in their car.

According to the US Census Bureau 2021 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata, 84% of extremely low-income households in Alaska are cost burdened and 69% are severely cost burdened. Renter households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs and utilities are cost burdened; those spending more than half their income are severely cost burdened. Of the extremely low-income renter households in Alaska, 30% are in the labor force, 30% are disabled, and 17% are seniors. Over 3/4 of Alaskans who are extremely low-income renter households are working, disabled or elderly. Rent increases can be debilitating for people living on a fixed income or who are cost burdened.



# Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness

Providing adequate notice of an upcoming rent increase will give renters time to adjust household finances to account for the added housing expense, identify other affordable housing options, or connect with housing providers if temporary assistance is needed. AKCH2 would like to thank Representative Josephson for introducing this important piece of legislation. If adopted, it will have an immediate impact on Alaskans struggling to afford rising housing costs and reduce their likelihood of falling into homelessness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brian Wilson'.

Brian Wilson, Executive Director  
Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness  
[director@alaskahousing-homeless.org](mailto:director@alaskahousing-homeless.org)



Support of HB262

February 6, 2024

Everybody needs a stable place to live. Housing is one of the most basic necessities. One measure that can help Alaskans with needed housing is HB 262. The Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness backs this legislation as a way to support tenants as they try to retain their housing or gain time to seek other options when rents increase. Alaska is in a housing crisis, and HB 262 is one way to prevent additional people from becoming homeless. A 90-day notice of a rent increase will make all the difference for many tenants. Currently, landlords are not required to give any specific notice of a rent increase, though there is a 30-day notice required to end a rental agreement.

Vacancy rates remain low in Alaska, which limits the ability of tenants to move to another housing unit. The process of apartment searching, paying application fees, being accepted at the new property, packing items, moving items, and paying the security deposit and first month's rent in 30 days is not only financially burdensome but mentally and physically burdensome. Providing tenants a longer time frame can be the difference between someone resorting to couch surfing or entering a homeless shelter vs. moving into another apartment. In one Anchorage complex, tenants on a fixed income were given a notice of a \$400 rent increase with just 30 days' notice. The majority of these tenants were families that only had one income. Additional time for rent increases will afford the tenant the time to look for housing options or solutions to fill the gap and cover the new rental rate.

High rents keep people from finding permanent housing and push people out of their homes. Rents in Anchorage have risen so high that certain vouchers for subsidized housing are useless. Those who finally move up on the waiting list and secure a voucher are unable to find housing that is within the voucher's price range. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development tries to address this by raising the Fair Market Rental Rates, but in some communities that still falls short. Rising rents leave little left over for basic needs like groceries. Rents in major cities outpace what low-income people earn. Some tenants have seen their rents increase by unaffordable amounts with hikes of 40%. Some have had to leave their homes. This hurts families and communities. Displaced tenants have had to move further away from family and medical providers, and their children have had to change schools. Those who cannot find other housing options are forced into camps or shelters. During our recent Point-In-Time Count, many of those who are unsheltered gave unaffordable rent as the reason. Many households are rent-burdened, spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Research has shown that higher levels of rent burden are associated with increased homelessness. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Alaska rose 7% in the last year, the largest increase since 2011.

Research demonstrates that the homeless population climbs faster when rent affordability — the share of income people spend on rent — crosses certain thresholds. Go beyond those thresholds, and even modest rent increases can push thousands more Americans into homelessness.

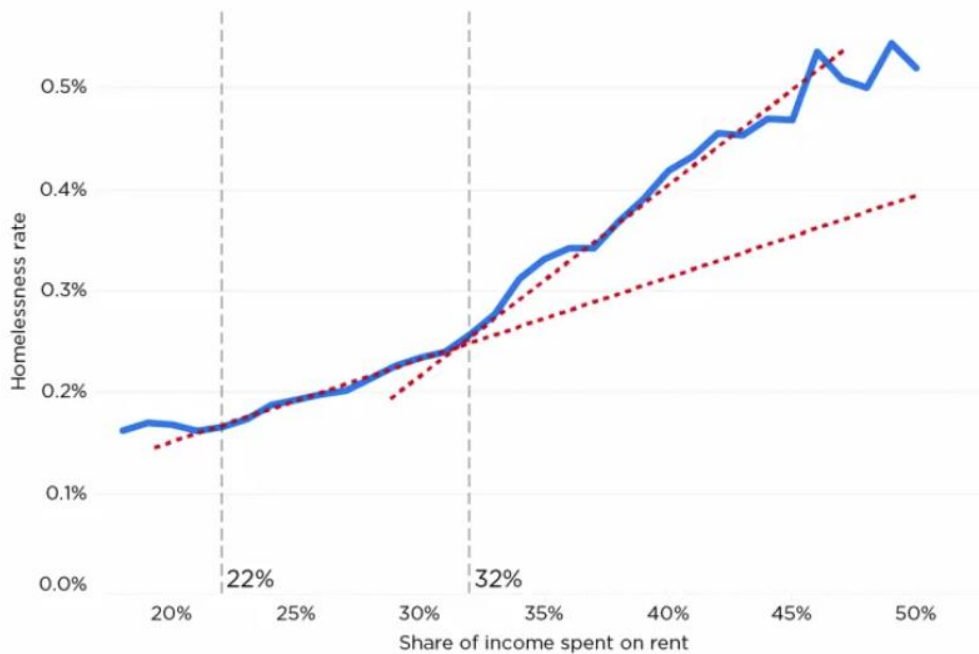


As we look to help Alaskans live healthy lives with the safety and stability of a home, HB 262 is a step forward by providing more time for tenants while not taking away the rights of landlords.

See below for projections based on 5 years of data on the intersection of rent affordability and homelessness prepared by Zillow Economic Research.

### Homelessness climbs faster when rent affordability reaches 22% and 32% thresholds

An uptick in rent affordability beyond 22 percent translates into more people experiencing homelessness. Beyond 32 percent means a faster-rising rate of homelessness — which could mean a homelessness crisis, unless there are mitigating factors within a community.



 **Zillow Economic Research** | Source: An analysis by Zillow Research Fellow Chris Glynn of the University of New Hampshire, Thomas Byrne of Boston University and Dennis Culhane of the University of Pennsylvania.

*Terria Ware*

Terria Ware  
Senior Director of Policy & Systems Planning

**From:** Venise Lono <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 8, 2024 2:27 AM  
**To:** Terria Ware <[tware@aceh.org](mailto:tware@aceh.org)>  
**Subject:** Re:

We are currently homeless due to my landlord have decided to sell her house. We were in Hawaii for a funeral and received a call from our kids that we were served with a 30 days notice. Prior to that our heater was out since middle of October, we than was asked if we could pay for maintenance. There were a few things that needed to replaced in boiler room. My mom at that time was going in and out of hospital and was diagnosed with pneumonia. Our electricity ended up increasing due to space heater we used and was provided by the owners mom whom lived across. We live in our home for almost 6 years. We have been looking for a home since then and kept getting denied due to our credit. I feel that 30 day's notice is not enough time for a family of 8 especially during the negative -24 degrees. We were unable to completely remove our belongings to storage by February 1st 2024 @ 4pm. Owner was kind enough to let us go back into property to take trash. We did the best we could with the short notice. Thank you for your time and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,  
Venise Lono

**From:** Terria Ware <[tware@aceh.org](mailto:tware@aceh.org)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 8, 2024 9:11 AM  
**To:** Lisa Keller <[Lisa.Keller@akleg.gov](mailto:Lisa.Keller@akleg.gov)>  
**Cc:** Lisa Demer <[ldemer@aceh.org](mailto:ldemer@aceh.org)>; Jessica Parks <[jparks@aceh.org](mailto:jparks@aceh.org)>  
**Subject:** FW: Re:

Hello,

I am not sure if this is helpful but below is the written testimony of a family of 8 that is now homeless in February after 6 years in their housing unit with 3 working adults in the household and 1 disabled adult with income. The family did give me permission to share this email.

When this family utilizes shelter if there is a room available in the hotel overflow of Family Emergency Cold Weather Shelter they would need 2 rooms and would have to check in after 6pm and check out at 11am the next day.