

My name is Evan Stewart and I am the Program Director at Jesse Tree, a non profit, based in the Treasure Valley that serves residents at risk of eviction and homelessness by providing case management and emergency rental assistance.

We have seen an unprecedented rise in eviction filings in the Treasure Valley at approximately 3000 over the past 3 years, a 40% rent increase which is double the national average, and more and more people struggling, living paycheck to paycheck, who work hard to pay their bills and rent on time. Consequently, emergencies, injuries, and hardships happen on a daily basis. If rent can't be paid on time, tenants are faced with compounding fees that may or may not be considered reasonable, which make it difficult to catch up.

My team and I have reviewed thousands of lease agreements and ledgers, many of which have inconsistencies in terms of fees and amounts listed on the lease and what is actually on the ledgers. It is also very common to see late fees that should be considered unreasonable, stacking up to hundreds of dollars over the actual rent amount and even in some cases thousands of dollars over.

In our state, it is already a somewhat unregulated industry with few tenant protections. There are many great property management companies out there that follow the rules but unfortunately we see there are plenty of others that try to take advantage of their tenants with exorbitant fees.

I support S Bill 1039 and I hope this can be a step in the right direction for additional tenant protections in our state.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "E. Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and a long, sweeping tail.