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causes of homelessness is eviction. “A no-cause eviction or even for-cause, you see people spiral into poverty,” he says.

The city of Eugene’s no-cause eviction law requires 30 days for tenants to move out, Cronin says. “Portland has a 90-day notice and they have relocation assistance, which really helps as a remedy to discourage it,” he says. “But also, the extra 60 days really helps people get their life together.”

Cronin’s task force visited the University of Oregon for a renters round table discussion and found that among students, the vast majority of whom are renters, no-cause evictions are incredibly common.

“I asked, ‘Raise your hand if you know someone who has been no-cause evicted or you yourself has been no-cause evicted.’ Everyone raised their hand,” he says.

Sue Sierralupe, clinic manager of Occupy Medical, says homeless students are a large part of Eugene’s unhoused community, though they are rarely visible.

“They’re couch surfing or they’re staying with a relative while looking for housing that they can afford,” Sierralupe says.

Due to the inherent shame that comes with being unhoused, Sierralupe says, many of these people who have

access to shelter of some kind (whether it be their vehicle or a friend’s place), don’t use the services they might need.

“Their embarrassment or shame in this situation brings them down, away even more from resources,” Sierralupe says. “People come into our clinic not wanting to take resources away from ‘the real homeless.’”

She adds: “In our system there is no greater shame than being economically disadvantaged, and it’s just luck of the draw.”

Sierralupe says being unhoused can spur other problems like drug and alcohol dependencies. Those sleeping in cars or other cramped spaces easily develop back pain and other muscle pain, which can lead to self-medicating, she says.

Being in the medical field, she says, the biggest thing she hopes to see in the future is single-payer health care.

Locally, Sierralupe hopes to see less criminalization of the unhoused — as well as more public restrooms, charging stations and available wi-fi.

“Don’t make it illegal for people to take care of themselves,” she says. “Make it easier for them to take care of themselves.”

Sierralupe also hopes that Eugene focuses more on its unhoused population and addresses “big box rental com-

panies,” who she says are exacerbating the unhoused situation, echoing Cronin’s concerns of expensive application fees and constant no-cause evictions.

“They’re making money off of this community left and right,” Sierralupe says. “Poverty is not a crime. Causing poverty is a crime.”

Cronin also has similar hopes for the city to improve its housing crisis, but is skeptical, especially with actions like the City Council’s tabling the construction excise tax last year — a tax on both residential and commercial construction (including those “big box” apartment buildings). That tax money would go toward affordable housing.

The Eugene City Council is scheduled to have a work session Jan. 28 on “Housing Tools & Strategies” which will include discussion on the construction excise tax.

The renters’ protections task force is surveying renters in the area on their needs and creating a report from that data. Cronin says the task force should be done sometime in the spring. Then it will compile a report for ideas on solutions and hand it off to the Housing Policy Board, which will in turn communicate with the city council on how to act on Eugene’s housing crisis.

“We need people to step up,” Cronin says. ■

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