

TO: House Committee on Housing
FROM: Fatima Jawaid
RE: YES on SB 282 to Emerge Stronger
DATE: April 26, 2021

Chair Fahey and members of the committee,

I am writing to you today in support of Senate Bill 282, which would extend the grace period for tenants to get caught up on back rent. Housing is a human right, but many of our neighbors have been living in fear that the ability to have a roof over their head could be taken away in an instant.

As an anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocate, I know that food insecurity has always been high in our state. But after the pandemic, **1 in 4 of our neighbors faced hunger**. This stark reality makes it more important than ever that this legislative session we pass policies that will support our communities in need, and show through our actions that we believe that every Oregonian has a right to be housed.

We know that it will take years for our country to economically recover from the pandemic, and the continued uncertainty around how long it will take many who lost their jobs or saw their hours reduced to go back to life as it once was. In addition, the pandemic has only exacerbated the inequities that exist in our state. **The public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations:** communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single mothers and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors. Passing SB 282 is an important equity issue and it needs to be viewed as such.

I have an extensive background in direct service work and have worked on countless affordable housing sites in Portland with individuals in our community who have experienced homelessness. And I know from experience that it is always the system in place, rather than the individual, that ensures their ability to obtain and maintain stable housing. While the overwhelming majority of tenants have stayed current on their rent - often foregoing food and health care to keep up - between 11% and 16% have fallen behind. Without action, families and individuals who owe back rent could be evicted in July. It is hundreds of my former clients of mine on my mind now when I strongly urge you to pass SB 282, **Senate Bill 282 is an important and urgent next step to ensure that Oregonians who rent their homes are not left behind** as Oregon starts to emerge from the pandemic.

I strongly urge you to vote yes on SB 282 and do everything you can to ensure Oregon's recovery leaves no one behind.