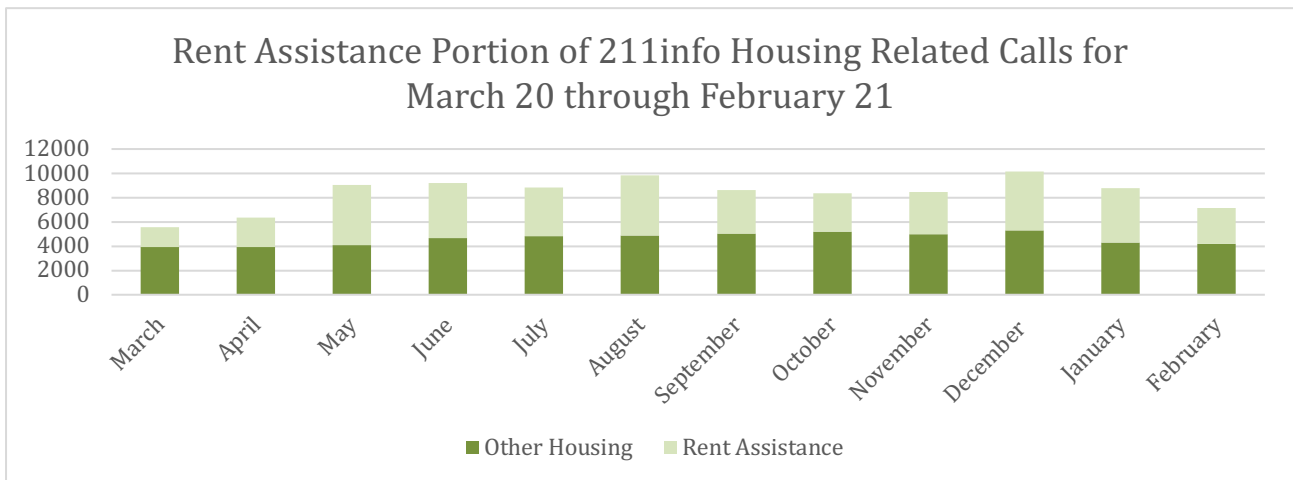April 26, 2021

House Committee on Housing
Oregon Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and members of the Committee,

Since March 2020, 211info has seen a 250% increase in calls statewide as COVID-19 continues to negatively impact Oregon's communities—a negative impact felt especially by individuals and families with low incomes who have lost work or income due to the pandemic. Of those, over 100,000 calls have been related to housing needs. And almost half of the individuals who called 211info about housing are in need of rental assistance. That is almost double the pre-pandemic volume and has held relatively steady as the pandemic has continued in 2021.

Based on call volume, it is very clear that a significant number of Oregonians have struggled to pay their rent since the start of the pandemic and are therefore at risk of being evicted when the Governor's moratorium expires on July 1. Extending the grace period for repayment of back-rent to February 2022 creates an opportunity for those who have struggled the most during this pandemic—working mothers, blue collar and low-income workers and BIPOC Oregonians—to access the state and federal tenant and landlord assistance being distributed and pay back their accumulated debt. Without this extra time, Oregonians across the state will face eviction through no fault of their own because of COVID lost income.

Even before the pandemic, 211info's call data shows that the need for housing services and rent support in Oregon outpaced the amount of services and funding available. Passing SB 282A will keep renters in their homes and provide much needed stability as the state begins to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic.

211info urges you to pass SB 282A, extending the grace period to pay back rent, providing protection for credit and rental records, extending protections from landlord retaliation, and allowing individuals to share housing in an emergency.

Thank you.