

Chair Jama, Co-Chair Linthicum, members of the Committee,

My name is Wendy Polanco and I live in Tigard. I am one of the tens of thousands of Oregonians who is a renter and has struggled financially during the COVID pandemic.

Thank you for your work to help give people like me more time to get back on our feet.

I am a single mother of three, I care for my ill father and I also work for a non-profit managing the emergency rent assistance program in Washington County. For almost a whole year now we have been under so much stress and pressure working long days and weekends to try to reach as many families as possible before evictions go into effect. This has placed me in a tough position where I have neglected my home responsibilities and made very poor nutrition decisions for my family because of time constraints, in addition, I can normally work part-time in addition to my regular job where I am an exempt employee, but this has not been a possibility due to the expectations and high demand from struggling families in this county. I like many Oregonians have had to make choices on which bills need more attention. I have been in situations like this where I have to get creative around my budget but if you add all of the unknown going on where we have no control at all and there are days when I cannot literally motivate myself to anything.

Renters need more time to pay back rent. It's impossible to get fully caught up by July. We need protection from COVID-era black marks on our credit and rental history, and protection from landlord retaliation. And during this ongoing emergency, we need the ability to share housing when it's necessary, without risking eviction.

- We need to ensure Oregon's recovery doesn't leave anyone out. Working mothers, BIPOC Oregonians and blue-collar workers have borne the economic brunt of the pandemic because they are most likely to have lost income, are more likely to rent their homes or are more likely to have contracted COVID.
- I have done my part and played by the rules but with COVID, the rules have changed. If I get an eviction or a late payment on my record it will make it almost impossible for me to find a new home and me/my family will suffer the effects of that for years to come. In a time like this when we have all faced an enemy larger than ourselves - this pandemic - we must come together and help each other through so that the impacts don't last a lifetime. I find it nearly impossible to earn 3 times the rent to live near my place of employment, plus pass a credit check and obtain a safe place for my loved ones with an eviction on my record as well, all while maintaining a balanced set of my mind to continue focusing in my workplace to help others in the same situation.
- The eviction moratorium was essential in helping renters like me stay safe and stable in our homes but we need more time to pay thousands of dollars in back rent or to apply for rental assistance. Though we increased our capacity from 40 to 300 appointments per month is still not enough! At current rates, the state won't be fully vaccinated by the rent due date of June 30th and our economy will likely remain in a partial shutdown.
- Families need stability to provide for their children's education. Oregon already has one of the highest rates of student homelessness in the country. We cannot force families whose children have been learning remotely to lose stability, internet connection, and the ability to keep their education going in the pandemic. From personal experience I assure you an eviction will stick to a child's mind for life, the first time I can remember experiencing an eviction was when I was 11 years old and the experience can and will affect a person's life forever.

Thank you,
Wendy Polanco