



June 14th, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazen and Holvey, and members of the committee,

My name is Tim Morris and I am the Executive Director of the Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA). We are a non-profit, public service organization dedicated to empowering tenants in our community. Our free Hotline educates tenants regarding their rights/protections and connects them with local resources. The data we collect with this direct connection to tenants is an invaluable tool in learning what tenants are facing every day. I have attached SETA's May Hotline report to show you a glimpse of what we have been seeing during the emergency period.

The majority of the people we serve identify as low-income. Further, one of the biggest challenges renters have faced to-date is the financial impact of the pandemic, which has disproportionately impacted BIPOC communities. Renters are also overrepresented in public-facing industries such as food service or retail, and only recently have these industries begun to fully open.

Even with the expansion of direct rent assistance programs, public data and projections from organizations like Portland State University show a staggeringly high number of renters have not had enough time to earn enough funds to pay rent arrears and be able to afford upcoming rent. **More time is clearly needed.** If tenants are able to receive rental assistance and remain housed, catastrophic impacts to their livelihoods and to local government budgets can be averted.

SETA's hotline data shows a significant drop in renters who are unaware of the availability of direct rent assistance programs. We believe this is evidence that community action agencies and the State of Oregon have done well in advertising the programs available over the past several months; however, many agencies are reporting significant backlogs and delays in processing these applications. Our experience shows that renters are doing everything in their power, including paying rent with credit cards and selling important assets, to afford back-rent and/or earn enough for upcoming rent. **State agencies and culturally specific organizations have worked so hard to keep tenants in their homes during the emergency period and it is vital that we do not allow protections to end right before those most vulnerable are fully able to access the resources becoming available.**



SETA stands at the front line of supporting tenants. **Our fear is that without the extension of these protections, Oregon will be full of empty apartments and overburdened streets.** We believe that these extended tenant protections are essential, reasonable, and fair to help the people who need it most and to keep people in their homes when they might otherwise be pushed out over a simple issue of rent assistance timelines.

Thank you,

Tim Morris

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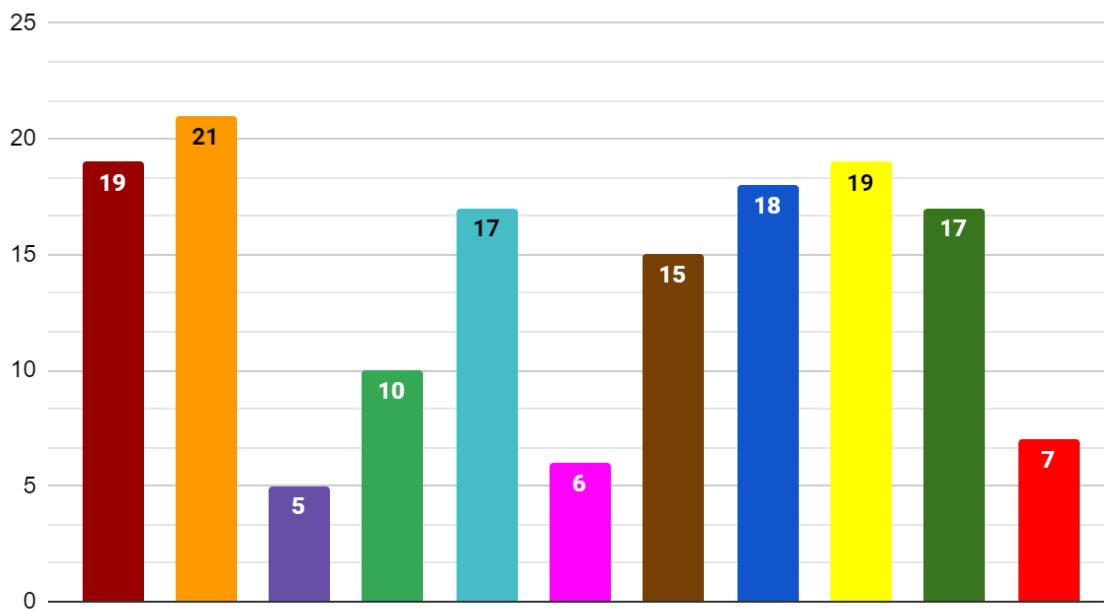


Mission Statement:

Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) is a 501c3 non-profit, public service organization that is dedicated to renters' rights and interests. We accomplish our goals by assisting, educating, and empowering tenants in the Springfield-Eugene area. We believe that housing rights are human rights and that affordable and accessible housing are the foundation of any strong community.

SETA Hotline Update May 1st - 31st 2021

Approximate Number of Calls in Top Categories*



For Cause Eviction - 19:

Mainly 30 day notices for lease violations and unpaid rent, which are "for cause" but are more often than not, retaliatory or improper.

No Cause Eviction - 21:

Many callers expressed concerns for no-cause evictions during the eviction moratorium, specifically 90 day notices. Many report the 90 day "for landlord reasons" notices are retaliatory or unjust..

Late Rent/Rent Assistance - 5:

Rent assistance calls have gone down significantly this month. We believe this is due to added advertising, accessibility, and the opening of new rental assistance programs.

Landlord Entry/Right To Privacy - 10:

Many callers, often elders and/or at risk continue to express concerns and fear of people entering their homes. Reports of unwanted, unnecessary, and repeated landlord entry without notice, especially by women with children.

Other Tenants/Neighbors - 17:

Wanting a roommate to leave, SDV situations, and neighbor harassment against protected classes reported.

Rent Increases - 6:

Reports of improper rent increase amounts and notices, including cases of raised rent as a retaliatory action by the landlord after asking for repairs in good faith.

Deposits/Fees - 15:

Concerns about cleaning fees, improperly kept security deposits, lease break fees, and having to pay for ordinary wear and tear repairs.

Habitability/Repairs - 18:

Tenants concerned about repairs not being made by landlords, especially during the pandemic. Many tenants reported multiple serious repair issues with no landlord resolution. Others report landlords refusing to make repairs due to rent owed.

Discrimination - 19:

Based on self reports we have heard from people with disabilities, elders, voucher holders, families with children, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ persons, and survivors of domestic violence who are experiencing discrimination. Most of these callers reported retaliation and harassment by landlords.

Rental Agreements/Applications - 17:

Concerns about language of rental agreements and applications.

Reasonable Accommodations - 7:

Tenants with disabilities questioning their rights for reasonable accommodation requests. Multiple tenants report a property management company stated that they no longer honor reasonable accommodation requests, despite disability and Fair Housing laws.

*Approximately **91** total calls answered, however, the sum is higher because calls frequently cover multiple issues.

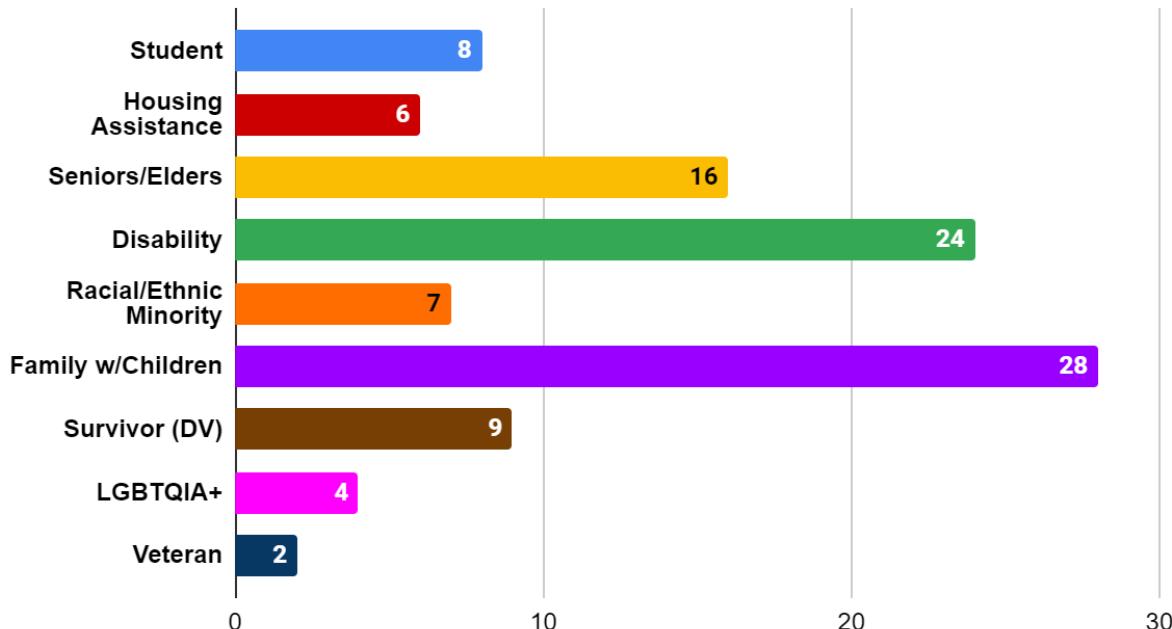
Demographic Information

Who Calls In?

Household demographics represent both asked and self-qualified statements from callers. Often, demographics are co-occurring like housing assistance and families with children, seniors/elders and disabilities, etc. Although we do ask, some callers prefer not to give personal demographic information.

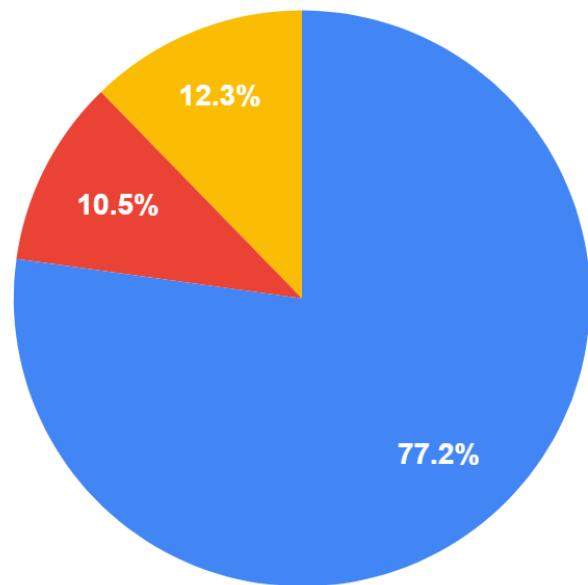
That being said, our data shows overrepresentation of people in vulnerable communities.

Demographics of Lane County Callers



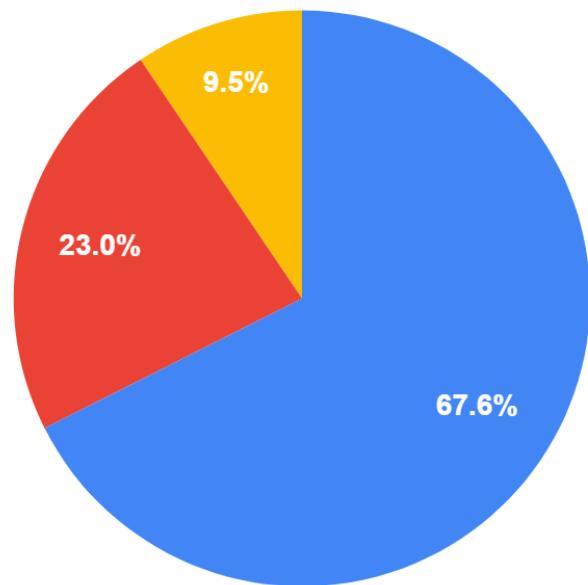
Household Income

● 0-125% FPL ● 125-200% FPL ● Over 200% FPL



Location

● Eugene ● Springfield ● Outside Metro Area



Report and Partial Analysis from Hotline Manager

For the month of May 2021, SETA responded to 91 calls and emails. We are pleased that SB 282 passed, extending and adding protections to tenants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. We are also pleased to note that calls related to rent assistance have decreased due to added advertising and social media campaigns, county email updates, and extended rental assistance programs. This is not only helping tenants in need but also providing resources to landlords needing assistance with back rent.

That being said, improper and retaliatory For-Cause and No-Cause Evictions continue to be a trend in Lane County, affecting vulnerable communities and putting multiple families, elders, and persons with disabilities at risk for becoming houseless. We have received multiple reports of improperly given eviction notices, notably through Facebook messenger and text, and improper qualifying landlord reasons; such as the landlord considering selling a home, minor repairs, and unnecessary renovations.

In the period covered, 51% of our callers mentioned COVID-19 and pandemic related issues as major concerns. Last month, 47% of callers mentioned concerns related to the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, public unemployment data suggests the vast majority of the unemployed in Lane County are in low-earning sectors of the economy.

A new top reason for calls this month is landlord discrimination and retaliation. Discrimination complaints this month have included lease violation notices against families of color for incidents that could not have occurred (tenants out of town, other tenants were the cause of said incident but families of color received the notice instead, etc). We are also following a trend of property management companies telling tenants with disabilities that they do not have to honor reasonable accommodation requests, like installing a shower bar or handheld shower head, allowing assistance animals, and equitable access to facilities. These incidents have been reported by tenants to the Fair Housing Council of Oregon via their hotline.

We are also seeing an increase in neighbor harassment complaints; notably from BIPOC communities, the LGBTQIA+ community, people who have or care for those with disabilities, and families with children. We are also noticing an increase in harassment and discrimination, including public "outing" by landlords, of survivors of domestic violence.

As the pandemic continues, more callers are contacting us in a state of crisis. Thankfully, we have a new Escalation Team made up of trauma informed volunteers that are trained in crisis de-escalation and domestic/sexual violence disclosure. We also have many resources in the community besides SETA (CAHOOTS, Whitebird, SASS, etc) to assist people experiencing a crisis directly in these unprecedented times. Our goal is to continue to provide resources and information to tenants while gathering data to show trends in our community at large.

With questions contact:
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