



Monday, January 30, 2023

Sheila Stiley, Board chair – NW Coastal Housing

Kymberly Horner, Vice-chair - Portland Community Reinvestment Inc.

Rachael Duke, Secretary - Community Partners for Affordable Housing

Kristy Rodriguez, Treasurer - Housing Authority of Malheur & Harney Counties

Trell Anderson – Northwest Housing Alternatives

David Brandt - Housing Works

Wakan Alferes - Homes for Good

Rita Grady – Polk CDC

Maria Elena Guerra - Farmworker Housing Development Corp

Nkenge Harmon Johnson – Urban League of Portland

Brad Ketch – Rockwood CDC & Community Dev. Corp. of Oregon

Erica Mills – NeighborWorks Umpqua

Shannon Vilhauer – Habitat for Humanity Oregon

Senator Kayse Jama
Chair, Senate Housing and Development Committee
900 Court St NE, S-409
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Honorable Chair Jama and members of the Committee:

We strongly urge you to pass SB 799 as quickly as possible as part of the Homelessness Prevention Package that includes \$100 million in rent new rent assistance, SB 611 / HB 2733 to limit the exorbitant and abusive rent increases too many landlords are imposing this year, and the Rental Market Data Bill for greater transparency into this essential component of Oregon's housing availability.

Housing Oregon is a membership-based statewide association of over 80 affordable housing community development corporations (CDCs) committed to serving and supporting low-income Oregonians across the housing needs spectrum – from homeless to homeowner. Today, every family entering a new housing development and every person proudly holding a key to their own front door for the first time in years, is at risk of being a few dollars short on rent and losing everything to eviction.

Reducing evictions is an essential part of our housing and homelessness response. As Gov. Kotek and legislative leadership commit to increasing the housing supply and rehousing our homeless neighbors, we must also ensure that the people who are housed today don't end up on the streets themselves.

We know this is true because it is happening today.

Evictions for non-payment are skyrocketing. From October 2022, when pandemic protections expired, through December 2022, there have been an average of 2,155 court evictions a month, every month. Before the pandemic, the average monthly rate was approximately 1,500 a month. This is a spike of 43%. More than 80% of current eviction filings are because rent was late.

We must make evictions rare and when they do happen, more fair. And during the pandemic, the legislature did exactly that. Thanks to the pandemic protections there were fewer evictions, and fewer people displaced from their homes.

It is time to take those lessons learned and apply them to today with SB 799.

SB 799 is a fair approach that gives people who are behind on their rent a reasonable amount of time to catch up and, if they need it, locate, apply and receive rent assistance.

It would address the fact that evictions in Oregon are too fast and don't give people a chance to protect their homes.

SB 799 would reinstate the "right to redemption," also known as "pay to stay," so that landlords cannot refuse payment at any point before a final court judgment. It will reinstate a safe harbor period of up to 60 days for people who have notified the landlord they have applied for rent assistance so no one is evicted when help is on the way. And finally, it will reinstate the requirement to provide access to eviction information in the six most common languages spoken in Oregon.

On average, landlords filed evictions against Black women renters at double the rate of or higher than their white renters in Oregon and in 16 other states, according to the ACLU's Women's Rights Project and Data Analytics team. Communities already facing historical and systemic barriers to jobs, housing, health care, opportunity and wealth are paying an unfair price for Oregon's unfair and rushed eviction laws.

In conclusion, we strongly urge this committee to support SB 799, it is vital for fairness and justice in our communities. Thank you very much for your consideration of our comments, and for your service to our state. You can reach me at 971-347-8503 or kevin@housingoregon.org

Kevin Cronin

Director of Member Relations and Industry Support
Housing Oregon