



Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

Re: Support for SB 282-1, Tenant COVID Protections

For the record, my name is Beth Burns and I represent p:ear to testify in support of tenant stability. Thank you for taking up SB 282-1. This bill is essential for the health, stability and well being of the young people we serve. I strongly support this bill.

Homelessness is a tragedy – it is not just a personal tragedy – it is a tragedy for our entire community. For many young people the pathway out of homelessness and into housing is incredibly challenging and once housed, deeply stabilizing. Housing restores your humanity and inspires hope for a more connected and healthy future. For renter households – including the formerly homeless and at risk of homelessness across our state who were already struggling pre-pandemic - the bill will ensure that there is time for state and federal rent assistance to reach landlords and resolve back rent debt and keep them from landing on the streets.

According to the state Office of Economic Analysis, job prospects for low-income Oregonians “remain dim” during the recovery and we won’t be back to full employment until 2023. At p:ear, we have witnessed this first hand, many young people who have worked to provide for themselves and their families for years suddenly finding themselves unemployed with few options. Many have made great sacrifices to pay their rent, but need time and support to catch up.

An eviction or a late payment can make it almost impossible for Renters to access housing in the future. Evictions cause substantial and tenacious increases in the risk of becoming homeless and further harm individuals through cascading disruptive factors such as job loss, adverse health effects, and negative consequences for children including destabilized education. They are costly and unfathomable at this time. *Eviction prevention and tenant rights protections are homelessness prevention.*

We need to ensure that Oregon’s recovery includes all Oregonians. 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; and / or are more likely to have contracted COVID-19. Our economy is expected to remain partially shutdown for the foreseeable future, leaving renters with few options for employment and an inability to pay their rent

back. We cannot afford to punish people for not having enough money during the economic downfall of a generation!

Oregon was already in a housing state of emergency and had 1000's of Oregonians on the brink of homelessness. The Covid-19 pandemic will impact families for years to come. We must come together and help each other through this to ensure that people remain safely housed and free from the trenches of housing instability and homelessness. Lacking safe and adequate housing not only strips people of their dignity, it has both calamitous personal and economic impacts: homelessness generates expenses for a community, not income; stable housing is critical for the welfare of one's financial, physical and mental health.

Our most vulnerable communities continue to be dynamically challenged by the effects of the pandemic. Renters are going to need more help and more time to pay thousands of dollars in back rent or to apply for financial assistance. As we move into the second year of the pandemic, we must act to ensure that the damage from the Covid pandemic does not have long lasting collateral consequences to Oregonians who rent their homes. We urge you to pass SB 282-1.

Thank you for your time and your work,



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