

Community Law

METROPOLITAN PUBLIC DEFENDER

February 14, 2024

My name is Leslie Nelson. I am a managing attorney with the Metropolitan Public Defender's Community Law Division. I manage our housing program, where we regularly represent low-income tenants. I am opposed to HB 2305.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.

Every day we represent people facing evictions in landlord/tenant court. Our attorneys regularly collaborate with low-income veterans, families and individuals facing homelessness. Eviction filings in Multnomah County in 2024 were more than double the number of filings in 2019. Most tenants do not have the benefit of having legal representation for these proceedings. We see that evictions have a wide range of negative impacts on the clients we represent, they deepen financial hardship, disrupt children's education, damage mental health, and make it harder to find future housing. Not only are our clients directly impacted, but so are our communities. Evictions result in increased rates of homelessness, higher crime rates, and disproportionate harm to low-income and minority populations, often leading to further economic hardship and mental health issues within affected neighborhoods; essentially, evictions can destabilize communities by displacing residents and undermining their sense of security and belonging.

HB 2305 is unnecessary, Landlords already have tools to address lease violations and repeated lease violations, including non-curable termination notices. Landlords also benefit from the rental assistance funding sometimes provided to tenants. HB 2305 would allow them to take advantage of the rental assistance and then evict tenants without any right to cure.

HB 2305 would result in many more evictions for veterans, families, and individuals. It is increasingly difficult to access rental assistance which already has resulted in even more evictions. Under HB 2305 landlords would have an opportunity to evict clients who are waiting for rental assistance with no opportunity to cure significantly worsening the situation for our communities.

HB 2305 is too broad and could easily lead to retaliatory and discriminatory evictions. The whole point of just-cause eviction requirements is to protect tenants from these evictions. This bill increases the likelihood of discriminatory enforcement.

Every day we see clients who have fallen behind on rent due to serious illness, loss of jobs, disabilities, family emergencies. HB 2305 would take protections from the most vulnerable Oregonians and would leave more people without stable homes.

Sincerely,

Leslie A. Nelson