



MULTIFAMILY NW

The Association Promoting Quality Rental Housing

Jan. 30, 2023

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Jama, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 799. As the largest association of housing providers in the state, Multifamily NW members collectively manage more than 275,000 units throughout Oregon and southwest Washington. On behalf of the association, we are grateful for your time and consideration of potential public policy solutions that aim to stabilize the housing industry in our state.

Unfortunately, SB 799 does not. It provides no assurance to renters or housing providers that the rent will be paid. This bill is just the latest in a cycle of well-intended but ineffective regulations that have disproportionate impacts on an industry that has done nothing wrong.

Instead, this bill would force housing providers to abide by pandemic-era restrictions regarding notices for nonpayment of rent, while doing nothing to ensure that low-income Oregonians have the assistance they need. We have all been down this road before, and we simply cannot afford to go back.

Our primary concern with the bill, as it is currently written, is that it would allow ALL renters, regardless of need, to slow roll the payment of rent by at least 60 days – and likely longer, because of court deadlines that are outside anyone's control.

We know from our experiences with the pandemic, many applicants will not qualify. Additionally, the serious concerns with the well-publicized inefficient delivery of rent assistance remain top of mind for both renters and housing providers.

The state extended these "safe harbor" requirements several times during the pandemic, every time with the promise that they were temporary. Emergency measures like this are not designed to be permanent public policy solutions.

To make them permanent would destabilize rental housing further – because there is no guarantee that the housing provider will recoup the money they will inevitably lose because of these requirements. The 60-day requirement essentially forces housing providers to subsidize housing for anyone that has not paid their rent, regardless of the reason they have not done so, without a guarantee that we'll be made whole.

For three years now, housing providers have struggled immensely with well-intended restrictions and regulations that, at the end of the day, impact our ability to provide stable housing for Oregonians.

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This committee's efforts should focus on the root causes of our housing crisis. We need to fund a permanent, efficient rental assistance program and dramatically expand our supply of rental housing stock. This bill does neither of those things – and does not provide any assurance to renters or housing providers that the rent will be paid.

Our association is ready and eager to work with this committee to find solutions that keep low-income Oregonians housed, but not at the direct expense of those providing the housing.

Thank you for your consideration of our perspective.

Deborah Imse
Executive Director
Multifamily NW