



We build strength, stability, self-reliance and shelter.

March 3, 2021

RE: Yes on SB 282-1, Tenant COVID Protections

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum and Members of the Committee:

My name is Shannon Vilhauer and I am the Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Oregon. Thank you for taking up SB 282-1. On behalf of our Board of Directors and the 25 local Habitat for Humanity affiliates we serve, I am writing to express our strong support this bill. Passage of SB 282-1 is essential for the health and well-being of our friends and neighbors—including the future homebuyers we serve.

This bill will stabilize renter households, ensuring that there is time for state and federal rent assistance to reach landlords and resolve back rent. Over the past year, many future homeowners in our pipeline have lost employment through no fault of their own. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate, negative impact on households who rely on service industry jobs, resulting in job loss for households in rural, suburban and urban Oregon communities, alike.

An estimated 11-16% of renters have fallen behind on rent. Hardworking Oregonians from all corners of the state need more time to stabilize their families. As the state prepares to distribute nearly a half a billion dollars in state and federal tenant and landlord assistance, please ensure that people have time to access assistance, and aren't unfairly evicted after the moratorium ends. A temporary setback during this pandemic should not make it impossible for households to rent in the future.

An eviction or a late payment can make it almost impossible for Renters to access housing. Without action, the COVID pandemic will affect families for years to come. As we all continue to face an enemy larger than ourselves, let's come together and help one another, so that the negative impacts don't last a lifetime.

During COVID and after devastating wildfires, many renters have had to double up: to care for kids who are now learning remotely, to care for elderly family members, or simply to share expenses because they cannot continue to pay rent. During this ongoing crisis, landlords should not kick people out who need to share housing. This provision is temporary, and only lasts through February – enabling families to weather this crisis.

Please act now to ensure that the fallout from the COVID pandemic does not sentence Oregonians who rent their homes to lasting collateral consequences. We urge you to pass SB 282-1.

Thank you for your dedication, service and sheer hard work,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shannon M. Vilhauer".

Shannon M. Vilhauer, Executive Director