

To: Housing Committee  
Re: HB 2372  
Date: 02/24/2021

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan and Committee Members,

In the face of the biggest economic crisis of our lifetimes, the Community Alliance of Tenants know far too well that bold renters' protections are more critical and urgent than ever.

As we continue to demand that our local and federal officials meet the moment of Canceling the Rent, we urge our state representatives to pass House Bills HB2372, that eliminates the landlord's ability to terminate residential tenancy without cause. Clarifies damages available to tenant for landlord's unlawful no-cause notice or fraudulent landlord-cause notice.

CAT recently released a study conducted by Portland State University. " Among all tenants, 22% report hostile, harassing, or threatening behavior from landlords or property managers; this increases to 32% for BIPOC identified tenants. About a quarter of landlords and managers are not communicating at all with tenants during the emergency. Calls to the hotline provide insights into conflicts and concerns for tenants. Even during the pandemic moratorium, about half the calls to the hotline were questions about eviction, with renters trying to understand how they were protected. We examined 315 call records with Covid-19 related issues to understand the variety of problems. These inquiries included landlords issuing no-cause termination notices, nonpayment termination notices, and charging late fees despite prohibitions in the moratorium. One-quarter of the analyzed inquiries reported landlord harassment, including threats of lockout. Some landlords have increased rent during the emergency, which is allowable legally. Others have pressured tenants to provide proof that their inability to pay relates to Covid-19, which is not required." We share these responses from the survey and hotline to illustrate that landlords are turning to no-cause evictions and other strategies to circumvent current COVID-19 tenant protections. For-cause evictions hold landlords accountable to their actions, and give tenants an avenue to contest or cure a notice.

Please ensure our most vulnerable Oregonians have access to more affordable housing options for our Black, Indigenous and other racially discriminated against populations.

Our already growing renter's state of emergency has only been worsened by this yearlong pandemic that still has no definitive end in sight and is leaving tens of thousands of Oregonians under threat of losing their homes this year. Your support on this measure is a critical must in keeping Oregonians housed in these unprecedented times. We cannot wait.

Sincerely,

Kim McCarty  
Executive Director,  
Community Alliance of Tenants