



community alliance of tenants

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

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

My name is Jensi Albright, I am the Membership Manager for the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT). I'm writing in support of SB 282-1 and want to stress that additionally it's imperative to add an extension to the eviction moratorium in whatever way it can be done too-whether by amendment, order from the governor, pass it as its own bill - please don't ignore this piece. It is vital. In the current outlay of bills and pandemic protections, the evictions moratorium will end before the state has time to distribute all rent assistance available through HB 4213. Let's fix that & avoid the devastating evictions which would have resulted from leaving that out.

In and out of the hearings, you have heard again and again from tenants and advocates how important this bill is, you are on the Housing Committee, I don't need to tell you that stable housing is vital for Oregonians' health and wellbeing.

A couple things I would add to the amazing (and some very venomous) testimonies you've already heard:

First - for every story from one tenant, please multiply it exponentially - remember there are hundreds and thousands of tenants struggling in similar and worse situations for whom coming to testify on their computers or smartphones was not an option in their day today.

I talk to tenants daily at CAT and our low income tenant base was already struggling prior to the pandemic (many of whom are the most marginalized and underrepresented renters in Oregon - BIPOC, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, seniors, single parents with small children). I'll skip the housing history in Oregon lesson about how we got here but I think you all know that these same tenants are shouldering the highest costs of the pandemic - to their health, their jobs and economic stability, & to their housing.



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When I ask our tenant members about if their housing situations are causing them stress and how that impacts their mental and physical health - nearly everyone acknowledges the impact as substantial. It strikes me as completely upside down and backwards that here in Oregon in the middle of a pandemic, it's the stress to try to stay housed which is substantially harming low income working people's health and wellbeing... I'm talking about the people who make up most of the essential workforce (because of them we eat - they are processing, cooking, serving and delivering our food, and they are keeping hospitals, nursing homes, grocery stores, and restaurants clean and disinfected so the rest of us stay well) - but they are not paid at all like doctors and nurses. They have been taking care of all of us in Oregon - it's time to give the covid relief they need (- which would actually be to map out a way to completely cancel all pandemic rent debt so they can survive this pandemic economically as well as physically).

Frankly, I'm tired of hearing talk of tenants 'gaming the system' as an excuse for not supporting renters, it's a false generalization and insulting. Census pulse data from the last week of December found more people borrowing, or needing assistance to meet their basic needs. As you know because you have heard it again and again from the data, the majority of tenants have been paying their rent to be best of their ability & often had to make choices that should not be necessary - regarding medicines, food, health care, heat, and things their kids need in order to maintain their rent payments.

For those tenants who might have been able to save at some point, too many have emptied their savings to pay rent & no longer have that safety net. I have spoken to multiple undocumented folks who used up their savings to keep rent paid - they aren't eligible for most relief funds. I worry about how they will cover any unforeseen expenses which inevitably happen.



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Another thing that I want to point out is how hard people are working to get the relief they need. I hear exhaustion and stress in people's voices as they tell me of the many times they've been turned down or missed out on relief - the funds already gone or the red tape too much. They have had to display their pain to prove daily how they aren't making it and now with the Landlord Compensation Fund, they are also having to put that into writing and swear to it. Where is the dignity and respect these hard working Oregonians deserve?

It's in our Oregon community's economic and public health best interest to figure out every way to stabilize and secure all Oregonians' housing. I believe that every eviction happening at this time is a failure on all of our parts and is adding to the public health crisis. Thank you for your hard work to support all Oregonians so we can get through this pandemic safely.

Thank you for supporting this bill & adding the necessary eviction moratorium extension.

Respectfully submitted,

Jensi Albright
Membership Manager
Community Alliance of Tenants