

Chair Fahey and members of the committee,

My name is Carina Zevely, I live in Portland. I am writing to you today as a member of the Oregon Food Bank community in support of Senate Bill 282, which would extend the grace period for tenants to get caught up on back rent.

Prior to the pandemic, 1 in 11 Oregonians were food insecure. In 2020, 1 in 4 of our neighbors faced hunger – a dramatic increase driven by the public health and economic fallout of COVID-19. These increases make it more important than ever that this legislative session we pass policies that will support our communities in emerging stronger from the crisis.

State economists have said that job prospects for low-income Oregonians “remain dim” during the recovery and that Oregon won’t be back to full employment until 2023. And the public health and economic impacts of the pandemic have fallen hardest on people who have faced systemic inequities for generations: communities of color, immigrants and refugees, single mothers and caregivers, and our trans and gender non-conforming neighbors.

While the overwhelming majority of tenants have stayed current on their rent - often foregoing food and health care to keep up - between 11% and 16% have fallen behind. Without action, families and individuals who owe back rent could be evicted in July. Senate Bill 282 is an important and urgent next step to ensure that Oregonians who rent their homes are not left behind as Oregon starts to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. It will help ensure people have more time to recover by:

- Protecting Oregonians from eviction by extending the grace period for repayment of back rent,
- Ensuring tenants don’t face additional barriers to housing in the future because of income lost during the pandemic, and
- Giving people facing eviction more time to apply for rental assistance

I strongly urge you to vote yes on SB 282 and do everything you can to ensure Oregon’s recovery leaves no one behind and we can emerge stronger together.

Thank you,
Carina Zevely