



Health Share of Oregon

June 14, 2021

House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE, Salem OR 97301

Re: Health Share Support for SB278

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, Vice Chair Holvey and Members of the House Rules Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share Health Share's support for SB278. Health Share is a CCO serving approximately 380,000 Oregon Health Plan (OHP) members in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington Counties. As Oregon's largest CCO, Health Share takes seriously its responsibility to advocate for the comprehensive quality-of-life needs of our diverse membership. The OHP population throughout our state has been amongst those constituencies hardest hit by the recurring waves of catastrophe throughout the past year. Our state has witnessed a steady increase in OHP enrollment throughout this period, as low-income individuals have experienced exponentially higher rates of job loss, lopsided levels of COVID-19 transmission and accumulated staggering amount of debt to keep their households afloat. Once again, OHP members are increasingly at risk for eviction as of July 1.

Immediate action is needed to prevent further generational harm upon OHP members who lack housing security. SB278 will keep people in their homes as rent assistance makes its way to landlords. Oregon has hundreds of millions of dollars for rent assistance and more time is needed to deliver these resources to those in need. The June 30, 2021 eviction moratorium deadline is simply coming too fast for the appropriate resources to be dispersed.

When the moratorium ends on June 30th, there will be no protections for people who cannot pay rent after July 1. Earlier legislation passed by this Legislature will give tenants time to pay back rent, but there are no grace periods for people who cannot pay rent on or after July 1. We must take steps now with SB278 to protect individuals and families who have applied for rent assistance from eviction, while their applications are pending. Evicting people who have applied for help is simply unfair. Moreover, SB278 protects both tenants and landlords. Oregon has significant federal dollars available for rental assistance to cover up to 12 months of back rent and three months of current and future rent. Local agencies are processing exponentially more applications than they normally receive, and it has become clear that renters will fall through the cracks without immediate legislative action.

Losing a home is already a financially and emotionally traumatic event to the people impacted. In general, Health Share recognizes that housing insecurity has a direct link to poorer health outcomes. Individuals who lack a stable roof over their head are far less likely to manage chronic physical, behavioral or oral health conditions because their survival is at stake in more pressing arenas of life. Unless SB278 is passed this session, we risk pushing a population that is already disadvantaged further into a cycle of unmanaged health and debilitating poverty. We believe SB278 will protect OHP members from further devastation and appreciate all efforts to support low-income tenants with housing security during this challenging period.

Sincerely,
James Schroeder, CEO
Health Share of Oregon