

Testimony on SB 799

My name is Tia Politi, I am the President of the Oregon Rental Housing Association. Our association represents almost 5000 small-time landlords in Oregon. I am opposed to the bill as it is written. Do you ask any other businesses in the state to forgo payments for the products or services they are receiving with no promise of recouping those losses? During the pandemic, landlords lost many thousands of dollars due to the various moratoria and many fled the market. More regulations will continue to fuel the exodus – the opposite of what you'd think you and tenant advocates would want.

We did not oppose SB 891 as it was an example of truly bipartisan legislation. Yes, landlords were required to wait for rent if the tenant showed proof of application for rent assistance, but if they failed to qualify we weren't left hanging – the state made us whole. I was one of those people, and both my renters and I appreciated it. Why can't you do the same thing with this bill? If we as a society see a benefit to providing financial assistance to someone in need, we should all pitch in, not make one group suffer financial losses to accommodate another's financial difficulties.

I'm also opposed to extending notice periods and court appearances. By the time the first of the month comes, the renter has known well before that they would be unable to pay the rent – it isn't a last-minute surprise. To extend their ability to apply for assistance to their first appearance in court is not necessary and will only continue to harm the rental housing industry in the state. We all want our renters to stay housed and appreciate a system whereby assistance is available to those in need. No housing provider wants to lose a good customer to a short-term problem, but we have bills to pay too.

I would also like to point out the extremely one-sided nature of these bills. They all come from tenant advocates with no input from landlords. Why can't we have the Landlord-Tenant Coalition back where stakeholders from both sides worked together in a spirit of compromise to achieve legislation that was balanced and beneficial for both sides? Isn't that how the best laws are made? Aren't we all in this together? Or will we continue to promote the false narrative of "us" vs "them"? We have ideas too, but you all don't seem to think landlords can add anything to the conversation. Whatever happened to the "Oregon Way"?

If passed, this bill will also hurt the very people you say you want to help – the marginalized, the historically disenfranchised. How? They won't get into housing in the first place. Screening standards will become tighter, and those with marginal incomes or so-so rental history just won't get in. These are the types of unintended consequences that lawmakers and tenant advocates just don't seem to understand, because you won't give us a seat at the table to explain how things work from our perspective. We're not heartless monsters, as much as the opposition would have you view us as such. We are by and large, regular people with regular jobs who have built a small portfolio of rental properties and have worked extremely hard to do so.

What is the predictable outcome of this legislation? Higher rents, fewer single-family home options, stricter screening standards, and possible ruin for many small-time landlords.