



Coalition of
Communities of
Color

June 14, 2021

Re: Support for SB 278 -2 amendments

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, and members of the House Committee on Rules:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in strong support of SB 278 with the -2 amendments to stabilize tenants who are waiting to receive rent assistance. For the record, my name is Jenny Lee, and I am the Deputy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally-specific community-based organizations working to take collective action for racial justice.

Thank you for taking rapid action as we fast approach the expiration of the eviction moratorium and seek to avert the eviction cliff. This legislation is a sensible fix we can pass now to address this gap between the expiration of the moratorium and the time needed to disburse rent assistance. Without this bridge, thousands of Oregonians will risk losing their homes at the very time our state should be turning a corner toward recovery.

And like the pandemic itself, these risks will not be equally shared across our state's residents. Black, Native American, Latinx, and Pacific Islanders faced entrenched disparities before the pandemic with lower incomes, fewer assets, and higher housing cost burdens. They were hit hardest by the pandemic, both as a public health crisis and an economic one. And with this impending tide of evictions, it's our communities of color--as well as our rural communities, and our low income families--who continue to be most at risk.

The eviction moratorium has meant the difference between safe housing and homelessness for tens of thousands of renters. And with the rental assistance to come, we will be able to keep many of them housed.

But if we fail to take action, the Oregonians who have had the least access to resources--those who have lost their jobs, who never earned enough to save for a rainy day, who had the most difficult time accessing assistance due to language barriers or the digital divide--will lose the very foundation of anyone's stability: their home. All of the investments our state made--and the challenges we overcame together--will be squandered if we let renters fall off this cliff.

Folks are getting back to work, children will be going back to school, but dealing with the impact of an eviction will derail lives and break up communities. Finding a new home and affording rental and security deposits are challenging under the best of circumstances. A sudden eviction during a precarious recovery will be even more devastating and destabilize individuals, families, and our state as a whole.

Thank you again for your work to navigate Oregon through the pandemic. Please stay the course, for the sake of Oregonians who rent their homes, and continue this commitment to the hope that you will support this bill.

Sincerely,


Jenny Lee
Deputy Director