



Smart policies for today's families.

June 14, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB 278-2

House Committee on Rules

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 278-2. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. We believe having a safe and stable home is a critical component to every family's success – it impacts a family's safety and security, their childrens' educational outcomes, and contributes to economic stability for the entire family. Stable housing is even more critical during a global pandemic where the safest place for people to be is at home.

Across the country as new relief has come in, systems and programs are rushing to get money out the door but the eviction moratorium deadline is simply coming too fast. 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. But there is money, and that is why we must take steps now with the new amendments to Senate Bill 278 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.

Under SB 278-2, a tenant who provides their landlord with documentation that they have applied for rent assistance may not be evicted for nonpayment for 60 days. This will allow time to help ensure that rent assistance payments reach the landlord. The bill ensures stability for tenants while getting resources into the hands of landlords.

Our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) neighbors are at the greatest risk of lifelong harm from the COVID evictions—it is no different when it comes to the impacts of the pandemic on their housing security. A recent study showed that while tenants continued to pay rent from April into summer, as many as 35% of those surveyed owe back rent. That number increases to 56% for people of color.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znlchr1791/files/2020-09/Renters%20in%20Covid-Oregon%20summer%202020.pdf>

The pandemic is also having disproportionate economic impacts on women. Approximately 865,000 women ages 20 and over, including 324,000 Latinas and 58,000 Black women, dropped out of the workforce in August and September alone<sup>2</sup>. By February of this year, women were still short of nearly 5.1 million jobs compared to February 2020.<sup>3</sup> If they lose their homes through eviction, not only will they have a permanent record, but families with children who are hanging on by a thread dealing with long term unemployment will have that thread cut.

The Oregon Legislature has taken significant and much appreciated steps during the pandemic and the wildfires to prevent evictions and keep people in their homes. It would be tragic if in these final weeks, people faced an unfair eviction because money didn't get allocated on time. We cannot allow all the good work we've done to keep people in their homes to fall apart now, right as assistance is coming available. We urge you to pass SB 278-2.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kwon, Policy Manager  
Family Forward Oregon

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<sup>2</sup> <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/september-jobs-fs1.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nwlc.org/resources/feb-jobs-2021/>