



February 18, 2024

Representative Pam Marsh
Chair, House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
900 Court St NE, H-474
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Opposition for House Bill 2305

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Breese-Overson, and Members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness:

I write on behalf of Home Forward in opposition to House Bill 2305. This bill would be a significant step back in addressing the housing and homelessness crisis in our state resulting in housing instability and displacement of vulnerable tenants.

Home Forward is a Public Housing Authority (PHA) and the largest provider of affordable housing in the state of Oregon. We serve more than 15,500 low-income households in Multnomah County by providing affordable housing, administering rent assistance, and providing supportive services. We also provide households with services ranging from youth supports to health and wellness. Our mission is to create a better community by providing housing stability through affordable housing development, housing choice expansion, services that support quality of life, and advocacy to improve local and national housing systems.

We know that housing stability is an essential ingredient in our housing and homelessness response. Evictions remove people from their homes. They exacerbate poverty by making it more difficult for families to find new homes. Further, we know there are disparities in evictions that negatively impact Black and brown households, women, transgender individuals, people with disabilities, and youth. If we want to avoid further marginalizing already marginalized communities, we need to hold the line on the positive reforms our state has made to evictions for nonpayment of rent.

At Home Forward, we prioritize housing stability for those struggling to pay rent and have reformed how we perform lease enforcement. Here are some examples of how Home Forward is currently handling lease enforcement for nonpayment of rent and other monies that may be owed:

- We provide 30 days' notice for nonpayment of rent to ensure households have time to catch up;
- We give residents the opportunity to enter into a reasonable repayment agreement at any point in the lease enforcement process in order to avoid an eviction;
- We immediately dismiss an eviction court case when a repayment agreement is entered into, which reduces risk to households so they are not in danger of further instability if the repayment agreement was enforced through an existing court action;
- Throughout this process, we facilitate access to emergency rent assistance resources whenever possible.

As a landlord, we already have enough tools to address nonpayment of rent and other lease violations. We do not want additional tools that come at the expense of the stability of vulnerable tenants.

Meanwhile, within our Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) program, we see the real-life barriers that evictions have on households attempting to find new housing in the private market, even with guaranteed permanent rent assistance. To counter these impacts, we expend program funds on the following mitigation efforts:

- We fund an expungement and eviction set aside clinic with Metropolitan Public Defenders;
- We fund housing search advocates to help with leasing;
- We provide money to pay down bad debt, including rental debt.

For all these reasons, I urge members of the Committee to oppose HB 2305. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. Please contact Christina Dirks, Director of Policy and Planning, Home Forward at christina.dirks@homeforward.org or (503) 348-1196 regarding these comments.

Sincerely,



Christina Dirks
Director of Policy and Planning
Home Forward