

March 2, 2021

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 330. The Gresham City Council supports efforts to ensure that housing choices are available to people of all incomes, and to reduce the number of Gresham households that are burdened by housing costs.

SB 330 creates a vital tool to address the financial challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic by allowing housing providers to receive tax credits for forgiveness of unpaid rent for renters impacted by the current financial crisis. Although the current eviction moratorium has allowed Oregonians to remain in their homes regardless of their ability to pay rent, many renters experiencing financial hardship now owe thousands of dollars in rent that they may not be able to pay back when the moratorium ends. Allowing landlords to receive tax credits for rent forgiveness will provide them with restitution for their unpaid rents while simultaneously providing struggling tenants with debt relief that may help them to avoid eviction.

The residents of Gresham have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Gresham has infection rates higher than anywhere else in Multnomah County, and higher numbers of infection than almost anywhere in the State of Oregon. For example, one zip code – 97233 – has incident rates (750 per 10,000) double the rate of Multnomah County as a whole (384 per 10,000)¹, and all of the zip codes in Gresham have higher infection rates than Multnomah County's overall rate. While we have yet to see the full impact of the pandemic in relation to unemployment and income, the health and financial impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated existing disparities. Thirty-four percent of renting households in Gresham already pay more than fifty percent of their income on rent², and the challenges of COVID-19 have made it even more difficult for these households to meet rent during the crisis.

The Gresham City Council has taken a number of steps to address the pandemic in our community. Last March, both residential landlords and commercial property owners were banned from evicting renters and terminating leases. Those that violated the city order risk losing their City of Gresham rental license or business license. The City also provided technical assistance and grants to support property owners, and worked on a variety of fronts to provide rent assistance. We believe that the SB 330 provides an additional tool to support housing stability by providing additional resources to both renters and property owners.

¹ <https://projects.oregonlive.com/coronavirus/cases-by-zip>

² <https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/UP/Documents/2020%20Severe%20Burden%20by%20City%2014-18.pdf>

Thank you for considering this important bill.

Sincerely,



Brian Monberg
Government Affairs Manager

CITY OF GRESHAM