



community alliance of tenants

February 27, 2023

Senator Winsley Campos, and Members of the Committee.

Re: Senate Bill 603 People's Housing Assistant Fund

On behalf of the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT), please accept this testimony in strong support of SB 603, The People's Housing Assistant Fund.

CAT supports tenants in organizing and advocating for fair and equitable protection in housing practices and laws as the membership-based statewide organization of tenants.

Even before the covid-19 pandemic fluctuating monthly incomes impacted our members, who frequently struggled financially. With current inflation and affordable housing rapidly becoming unattainable, this has only exacerbated the problem.

Safety net programs, such as SNAP benefits, which help to subsidize monthly food budgets, help to promote financial stability. However, safety net programs often fail to aid households in generating enough income to cover shortfalls or deal with unexpected expenses, especially when unpredictable hours and wages are low. Due in part to the anti-immigrant sentiment and limitations, many families, particularly Hispanic families, are frequently less likely to apply for these benefits than families from other racial and ethnic groups. Direct cash assistance empowers our members and Oregonians with fewer economic resources to meet their family's basic needs.

CAT has over 6000 members statewide, and each one of them faces unique difficulties and circumstances. Financial resources can be used to meet even the most basic needs, like purchasing gas to get to work. If a low-income tenant's situation has changed, cash can help prevent an eviction. Cash assistance can also help seniors who frequently must choose between paying for their medical expenses or utility bills.

Although disastrous in many ways, the pandemic effectively showed that the Federal stimulus payments had an immediate impact on the economic hardships of low-income households. Support of SB 603 can provide valuable insights into how to support those most in need. The research could supply evidence-based solutions to help improve the quality of life of low-income Oregonians, creating a pathway to upward mobility that can positively affect the state's overall long-term economic health.

Community Alliance of Tenants strongly urges the passage of SB 603. This bill will not only provide thousands of Oregonians with immediate financial assistance, but the extensive data generated by the study also has the potential to have far-reaching effects, and we believe it is a worthy investment of resources. I appreciate your consideration.

Sincerely,
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