

OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE



SUPPORT SB 799 SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT

JANUARY 30, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: OREGON ATTORNEY GENERAL'S SEXUAL ASSAULT TASK FORCE

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee:

Thank you for your time and consideration. **On behalf of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force, I urge your support of Senate Bill 799 to protect rent assistance applicants from eviction.**

The mission of the Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force¹ is to advance a multi-disciplinary, survivor-centered approach to the prevention of and response to sexual violence in Oregon. Our goal is to prevent sexual violence from happening in the first place, while simultaneously improving our response efforts to mitigate trauma and ensure the safety and security of all victims.

Access to safe and stable housing is essential for all survivors of sexual and domestic violence in Oregon. Housing instability and homelessness increases the risk of experiencing violence and abuse.

83% of domestic violence survivors entering shelters in Oregon identified "finding housing I can afford" as a need. Survivors seeking to establish safe homes for themselves and their families are often rent-burdened, and one unexpected debt or rent increase can cause possible homelessness. Families at risk need time to access rent assistance and services so they don't face displacement and danger.

Earlier legislation passed by this Legislature gave tenants the ability to stay in their homes while rent assistance was being processed. Unfortunately, many of these protections are now expiring. That is why we must take steps now with Senate Bill 799 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. **Senate Bill 799 continues the great work passed by this Legislature, protecting both tenants and landlords.**

Economic recovery has not come for too many Oregon families. According to the latest Household Pulse Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, 61% of Oregon renters responding to the survey demonstrated likelihood of leaving their homes due to eviction in next two months.² Parents and caregivers, people of color, and the elderly are disproportionately impacted. The survey continues to show renters are making extreme sacrifices to stay in their homes – putting basic needs on credit cards, spending down savings or selling assets, borrowing money from family or friends, or skipping meals.

Under SB 799, 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.

Evicting someone who has done everything right is simply unfair. Renters cannot and should not be the ones who pay the price for the system overload that delays assistance. SB 799 protects both tenants and landlords.

According to the OHCS dashboard, 67,522 applications for assistance have been granted to Oregonians needing support to maintain access to safe housing.³ 85% of families granted funds earn less than 50% of their area median income, meaning that they have few resources at hand to make up rent on their own. The overwhelming demand shows us that there is incredible risk for displacement through unfair evictions if Oregon does not take swift action.

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 we allowed Oregonians to face an unfair eviction because money did not get allocated on time. **We cannot allow all the good work we have done to keep people in their homes to fall apart now. Please quickly pass SB 799.**

Thank you for so quickly responding to the unprecedeted situation facing Oregon.
Most sincerely,



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¹The Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force is a private, non-profit, non-governmental statewide agency with over 100 multidisciplinary members appointed by Attorney General Rosenblum.

²U.S. Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey. (accessed 1/26/23). Likelihood of Having to Leave this House in Next Two Months Due to Eviction, by Select Characteristics: Oregon (Week 53).

³Oregon Housing and Community Services OERAP Dashboard 2022 (accessed 1/26/23). Applications Paid (last updated Dec 30, 2022).