

Opposition to SB 799 –

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In 2020 the worldwide Covid pandemic brought our economy to a halt. Within that crisis the fear of mass unemployment threatened our most vulnerable population and stimulated an instant reaction by lawmakers.

As the race for a vaccination was on, the other heated contest - to find money to keep people housed - played out across the country. In Oregon alone, those efforts lured our federal government to commit an unprecedented **quarter of a billion dollars** in rent relief. In response, the state legislature enacted a series of temporary bills to slow the eviction process down, in order to allow those committed federal dollars time to be absorbed by landlords. Meanwhile as a reaction to the catastrophic wildfires that year, lawmakers also required all landlords to house as many guest occupants as could legally fit into any unit, without requiring a signed rental contract.

With literally hundreds of hours of involvement, discussion and analysis, the state lawmakers agreed to allow this experiment to take place as a temporary solution and agreed it would not permanently change established statutes. They are now renegeing on this promise, at the peril of the very parties they have been elected to protect.

The authors of this bill would like us to believe that it protects tenants and may help address the growing problem of homelessness.

This is simply not true. The title of the bill should not be “Eviction Protection” it should be ‘The Tenant - Landlord Forced Adversary Act’.

Contrary to the narrative, evictions are NOT desired by landlords. And instead of allowing stakeholders an opportunity to work together to solve any temporary affordability gaps while obtaining rent assistance going forward, SB 799 creates legal nightmares for all parties involved by extending legal timelines to extend uncompensated tenancies, while forcing landlords to accept unauthorized occupants to live in their properties without evidence of their financial capacity. This not only creates huge financial burdens on rental property providers, but also promotes unsafe tenancies for neighboring renters and the community at large. We now regularly see evictions that are resulting from authorized tenants moving out leaving the units in the hands of undocumented occupants who disrupt their neighborhood and ultimately result in Sheriff lockouts that may take months to transpire at the property owners’ expense while creating long term safety issues for the neighboring residents.

We need to stop this bill from proceeding and we ask that we begin to work together in workgroups to find real solutions to solve the many disparate housing problems in a way that can make all Oregonians proud.