



HOUSING ALLIANCE

June 14, 2021

House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Holvey, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today in behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance in strong support of the -2 amendments to SB 278, which would prevent the eviction of tenants who have applied for rent assistance.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of ninety organizations from all parts of the state, including affordable housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that a safe and stable home is a basic human need.

In December, 2020, the Legislature came together to maintain a strong eviction moratorium for non-payment of rent, through June 30, 2020¹. This critical action has helped people maintain housing stability, and has likely saved people's lives. We are asking you today to take further action to prevent many Oregonians from grappling with mounting debt and homelessness on July 1, as our moratorium ends.

The pandemic has lifted up countless stories of people who are making extreme sacrifices to pay rent and remain in their homes. The latest Census Household Pulse Survey² data from the end of May reports that:

- 17% of Oregon renters and 24% of parents or guardians said they could not pay June rent.
- 54% of people behind on rent said they were likely to be evicted.
- 26% report using credit cards or loans, 23% report spending down savings or selling possessions, and 18% report borrowing money from family or friends to meet basic needs.

Stories in the news media over the last year have shared incredibly difficult stories of families selling cars, skipping meals, and making other sacrifices in order to pay their rent. This is not uncommon and it is critical that we make public policy decisions to protect people in their homes.

Families of color have been particularly hard hit by COVID – both the impacts of job loss and the virus – due to systemic racism which has kept many in low wage jobs, or a legacy of

¹ <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2020S3/Measures/Overview/HB4401>

² <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/household-pulse-survey/data.html>

environmental impacts which negatively affect their health. Research³ last fall by Portland State University reflects that people of color are more likely to owe back rent.

The Legislature and the federal government have made significant commitments of rent assistance to help Oregonians remain stable in their homes. The Legislature committed \$200 million in December which has and continues to offer significant relief to impacted Oregonians. The third and final round of the Landlord Compensation Fund (\$150 million) is now open to help pay down back due rent, and the STARR funds (\$50 million) are quickly being committed and spent prior to June 30. These resources, combined with the \$204 million⁴ coming to Oregon from the COVID Relief package passed by Congress in December, and an additional \$156 million for emergency rental assistance committed in March of 2021⁵, will provide significant relief to Oregonians. Of these federal resources, a total of \$360 million is coming directly to the State, with an additional \$146 million going directly to local governments.

Oregon Housing and Community Services, community action agencies, public housing authorities, and non-profit organizations across Oregon are working incredibly hard – as they have been since the pandemic began – to get rent assistance resources out the door and into the hands of landlords and tenants, and to provide basic assistance to prevent evictions. The federal resources are taking additional time to get out the door as our state will need to navigate new federal rules and program requirements, and distribute resources. The final guidelines from the US Department of Treasury for the federal dollars was not released until May 7, 2021.

More time is necessary to get the unprecedented level of rent assistance out the door. With just over two and a half weeks left until the eviction moratorium expires, the Legislature should adopt the -2 amendments to SB 278, and prevent non-payment eviction of anyone who has applied for rent assistance. The amendments provide:

- If a tenant has applied for rent assistance, an eviction would be prevented for 60 days while that application is pending. The sixty-day clock will start when the tenant notifies their landlord of their application.
- Rent assistance providers will need to provide something to the tenant that indicates they've applied for assistance.
- Tenants can let their landlord know they've applied for assistance any time at or before first appearance in Court.
- If after 60 days a landlord has not received assistance, they can move forward with an eviction filing.
- Termination notices and eviction paperwork will be updated to inform tenants of where to go to apply for rent assistance.
- These provisions will sunset in February 2022.

It is important to remember that evictions have devastating consequences for individuals, families, and children – but the impact of evictions does not stop there. Evictions impact entire communities – classrooms in schools, places of employment, and our families and communities.

In closing, we reiterate that households are making tough choices to continue paying rent. It would be tragic if in these final moments, people lost their homes because money didn't get

³ <https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/housing-insecurity-report>

⁴ <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/emergency-rental-assistance-program>

⁵ <https://endhomelessness.org/help-is-on-the-way-the-american-rescue-plan-act-becomes-law/>

allocated on time. We cannot allow all the good work we've done to keep people in their homes to fall apart now.

We urge you to pass SB 278 with the -2 amendments to help ensure people waiting for rent assistance are not evicted.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
Business for a Better Portland
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Chrisman Development
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Eugene
City of Forest Grove
City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
City of Portland
City of Tigard
Clackamas County
Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
College Housing Northwest
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Development Partners
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
DevNW
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
Farmworker Housing Development Corp.
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Home Forward
Homes for Good
Housing Authorities of Oregon
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
Immigrant & Refugee Community Organization
Impact Northwest
Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
JOIN
Lane County Health and Human Services
League of Oregon Cities
League of Women Voters of Oregon
Lincoln County
Looking Glass Community Services
Mainstream Housing Inc.
Metro
Mid-Columbia Housing Authority
NAYA Family Center
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Portland: Neighbors Welcome
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Residents Organizing for Change (ROC) Oregon
Rogue Action Center
Rose CDC
St. Francis Shelter
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Think Real Estate
Transition Projects
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition