

February 13th, 2024

Re: Support for Rent Assistance Investments

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Housing and Development Committee:

My name is Danny Rauda, and I am the coordinator of the social justice ministry at St Anthony Catholic Church in Tigard. I am writing on behalf of 10,144 individually registered parishioners from European, Hispanic, Vietnamese and other diverse backgrounds in support of investments in rent assistance.

Over the past three months, I have helped facilitate a series of listening sessions to identify the key problems impacting members of St Anthony and the broader Tigard and Washington County community. Our goal has been to observe, listen to, and know the struggles people are navigating every day. In total, we have heard from nearly 500 people over the course of this listening process. By far, economic and housing instability has been the most pressing issue that community members are concerned about.

This issue was made worse by the recent ice storm. As a result of losing a week's wage, and in some cases more, people found themselves unable to pay the rent and other bills. In some cases, we heard about people being displaced from their apartments because a pipe burst or a tree fell on the property. What we heard time and again was that people were unable to find the financial assistance they needed. Either organizations and agencies were out of funds or they were backlogged multiple months so unable to respond in a timely manner. In short, we have found that hardworking Oregonians are struggling to make ends meet, facing eviction and homelessness as a result. Our current system is unable to effectively respond to the housing and financial needs of the community.

86% of eviction filings are for nonpayment, against people who have fallen behind on their rent. There are close to 2000 eviction filings a month. The availability of rent assistance for tenants in the critical time of need will help ensure that landlords get paid, evictions are avoided, and most importantly, Oregonians stay housed.

Thank you for your work on behalf of Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Danny Rauda

