

April 27, 2020

Re: Support for SB 282A, Tenant COVID Protections

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Winsley Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan, Members of the Committee,

I am so happy to be here talking with you today because the fact SB 282A is before this committee shows that it has already passed the Senate and is - I hope - on its way to full passage and will go into effect soon to give tenants peace of mind. I was also gratified to see that the Senate bill passed with bipartisan support and no opposition. As a renter who has struggled during the pandemic it means a lot to me the legislature understands that when the eviction moratorium ends on June 30th, many renters are going to need more time to access the rental assistance that will keep us from losing our homes.

Here is my story: I have a good job with UPS, but I am not able to work right now because I need a hip replacement. My landlord has also been supportive, but he can only do that for so long so I was glad that the landlord compensation fund was passed. I owe back rent and have submitted my hardship declaration to my landlord and I am hoping that funding will come through for me and my children. But more must be done.

I am very concerned not only for myself but for other members of my community about what will happen when the eviction moratorium ends, particularly as caseloads are increasing and working in public is becoming high risk again. People are living on the edge and having to face an eviction because the rent is suddenly due after a long period of reduced income and hardship will bring problems for them and for everyone. Fallout from a wave of delayed pandemic evictions will bring added costs to our shelters, our health care system, our county and our state.

We need to ensure Oregon's recovery doesn't leave anyone out. Working mothers, BIPOC Oregonians and blue-collar workers have borne the economic brunt of the pandemic because they are most likely to have lost income, are more likely to rent their homes or are more likely to have contracted COVID.

According to the state Office of Economic Analysis, job prospects for low-income Oregonians "remain dim" during the recovery and we won't be back to full employment until 2023.

An estimated 11-16% of renters have fallen behind on rent. With dim prospects for recovering lost income, renting Oregonians who fell behind through no fault of our own are going to need more time to stabilize our families. As nearly a half a billion dollars of state and federal tenant and landlord assistance are being distributed, we must ensure that people have time to access assistance, they aren't unfairly evicted after the moratorium ends, and that a temporary setback during COVID doesn't make it impossible for us to rent in the future.

Oregon's renting families have hung on this long. Please, Oregon lawmakers don't give up on us now. Please pass SB 282-1.

Thank you.

Erin Meechan  
Gresham Oregon