



LatinoNetwork

**Testimony of David DiMatteo, Director of Economic Justice
Regarding SB 278
House Rules Committee
June 14th, 2021**

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Holvey, Rep. Daniel Bonham, Rep. Julie Fahey, Rep. Andrea Salinas, Rep. Jack Zika

Latino Network supports SB 278 to ensure children and families have a safe and healthy place to live while rent assistance is processed. SB 278 takes steps today to protect renter households who have applied for rent assistance from eviction.

On June 30th, 2021 there will be no protections for people who cannot pay rent after July 1, though funds are on their way. Earlier legislation passed by this Legislature will give tenants time to pay back rent, but there are no grace periods for people who cannot pay rent on or after July 1. Evictions are only going to cost the state and our communities more in the long run if we do not act now.

Throughout the pandemic, families struggled and sacrificed to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table. As a community-based organization, we know first-hand what families went through as a contagious virus spread through our communities and the economy began to collapse for working-class families. Many families were unable to adjust to a work-from-home lifestyle. In our community, older siblings looked after their younger brothers, sisters, and cousins as parents looked for work (anything) or sought out support. In some cases, our young students sacrificed their education to pick up extra shifts at their jobs. Despite their best efforts, 17% of Oregon renters and 24% of parents said they could not pay June rent according to the most recent U.S. Census Pulse Survey. 54% of people behind on rent said they were likely to be evicted. This is alarming because a disproportionate number of renters are households from marginalized communities or communities of color.

Evicting someone who has done everything right is simply unfair. Under SB 278, 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.

SB 278 protects both tenants and landlords. Oregon has significant federal dollars available for rental assistance to cover up to 12 months of back rent and three months of current and future rent.



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Local agencies are processing hundreds more applications than they normally receive and it's clear that not everyone will receive payments by July 1. 62% of applicants 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 overwhelming risk for displacement through unfair evictions if Oregon doesn't 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. We cannot allow all the good work we've done to keep people in their homes to fall apart now, right as assistance is coming available.

We urge you to quickly pass SB 278.