



March 3rd, 2021

Chair Jama, Vice-chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 282-1. The Springfield-Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) is a non-profit dedicated to empowering tenants in our community. Our free Hotline educates tenants regarding their rights/protections and connects them with local resources. The data we collect from the hotline has proven to be an invaluable tool in gleaning information the struggles tenants are facing on the ground. Accompanying this document, I will be submitting our February Hotline Report which outlines in detail the issues we discerned from last month's calls.

It is the strong opinion of SETA that we must pass SB 282-1 in full protection of those most vulnerable in our community. The eviction moratorium was essential in keeping renters safe and stable in their homes, but more time is needed to help people pay thousands of dollars in back rent and/or to apply and receive rental assistance. At current rates, the state will not be fully vaccinated by the rent due-date of June 30th and our economy will likely remain in partial shutdown. Renters are dramatically over-represented in the most-impacted industries and if they cannot go back to work, it follows that they will not be able to pay their back rent.

SETA would also like to emphasize the components addressing retaliation and occupancy limits. John Vanlandingham pointed out that landlords have increasingly "trumped-up" charges that would often have been ignored in the past. SETA agrees that these are obvious efforts to circumvent the protections implemented already implemented by the legislature. Examining all calls made to SETA's Tenant Hotline since we began reporting data in March of 2020, both no-cause and for-cause evictions have been the most frequent call topic in nine of the past twelve months (often by

margins as wide as double the next-most frequent call topic), and most of these calls describe “violations” as frivolous as locations of indoor plants or furniture installed twenty years ago, for example. These evictions are occurring in spite of the eviction moratoria and it is clear that the legislature must take further action if its original intent is to be carried out.

The Oregon Department of Justice testified in December that if no action is taken, there will be an immediate filing of 14,000 non-payment eviction cases. This number will only grow as we get closer to the expiration of the moratorium in less than four months from today. We appreciate that some are not happy with current form of SB 282; SETA, too, wishes certain things were changed. However, people’s lives and livelihoods are literally on the line and we have no time to go back to square one with a laggardly workgroup process. SB 282 is what we have in front of us and **we urge you to pass it without delay.**

Thank you, again, for the opportunity for members of the public to provide comment on insight regarding this legislation. Please see the accompanying Hotline Report that we are also submitting to the record. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out if the Springfield-Eugene Tenant Association may be at all useful in your efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

Timothy Morris

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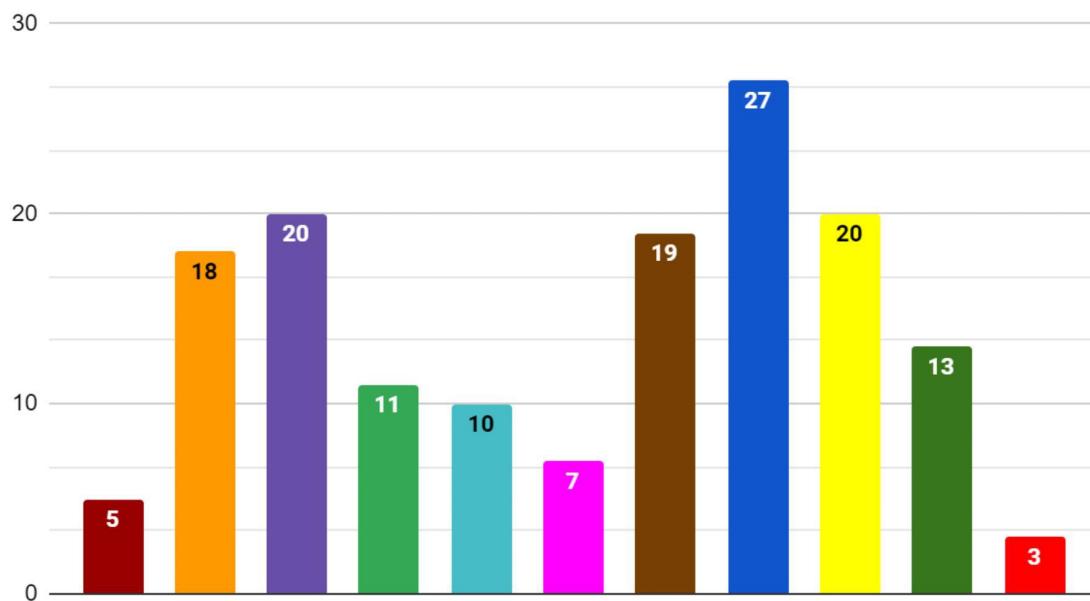


Mission Statement:

Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) is a 501c3 non-profit, public service organization that is dedicated to renters' rights and interests. We accomplish our goals by assisting, educating, and empowering tenants in the Springfield-Eugene area. We believe that housing rights are human rights and that affordable and accessible housing are the foundation of any strong community.

SETA Hotline Update February 1st - 28th 2021

Approximate Number of Calls in Top Categories*



For Cause Eviction - 5:

Mainly 30 day notices for lease violations. This is often because they have a friend or family member staying with them because of the pandemic. Also reports eviction notices for unpaid rent without the landlord including a copy of moratorium and declaration.

No Cause Eviction - 18:

Many callers expressed concerns for no-cause evictions during the eviction moratorium, specifically 90 day notices. Some report the 90 day "for landlord reasons" notices are retaliatory or unjust.

Late Rent/Rent Assistance - 20:

Type of call was very rare before the pandemic. Many callers report loss of income and inability to pay back rent. Many callers express rent delays related to not receiving Unemployment Insurance Benefits.

Landlord Entry/Right To Privacy - 11:

Many callers, often elders and/or at risk continue to express concerns and fear of people entering their homes. Most report entry because the landlord is selling the property.

Other Tenants/Neighbors - 10:

Wanting a roommate to leave, SDV situations, and neighbor harassment against protected classes reported.

Rent Increases - 7:

Reports of improper rent increase amounts and notices, including cases of raised rent as a retaliatory action by the landlord.

Deposits/Fees - 19:

Concerns about cleaning fees, improperly kept security deposits, lease break fees. Multiple calls of landlords requiring pet rent or pet deposit for an assistance animal, even after being informed of guidelines.

Habitability/Repairs - 27:

Tenants concerned about repairs not being made by landlords, especially during the pandemic. Many tenants reported multiple serious repair issues with no landlord resolution.

Discrimination - 20:

Based on self reports we have heard from people with disabilities, elders, voucher holders, families with children, racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+ persons, and survivors of domestic violence who believe they are or could be experiencing discrimination. Most of these callers reported retaliation and harassment by landlords.

Rental Agreements/Applications - 13:

Concerns about language of rental agreements and applications. Reports of differing information received from landlords and what is in the rental agreement.

Reasonable Accomodations - 3:

Tenants with disabilities questioning their rights for reasonable accommodation requests, multiple reports of landlord denial of reasonable accommodations.

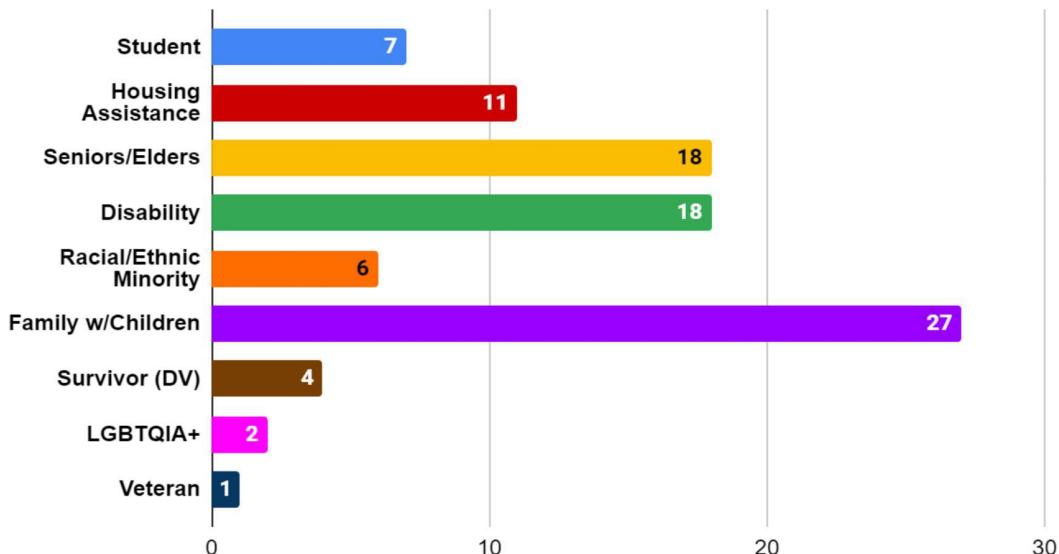
*Approximately 113 total calls answered, however, the sum is higher because calls frequently cover multiple issues.

Demographic Information

Who Calls In?

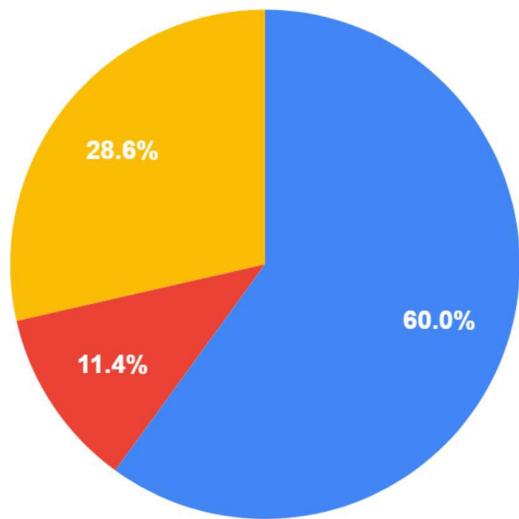
Household demographics represent both asked and self-qualified statements from callers. Often, demographics are co-occurring like housing assistance and families with children, seniors/elders and disabilities, etc. Although we do ask demographic information, some callers prefer not to give that information. That being said, our data shows overrepresentation of people in vulnerable communities.

Demographics



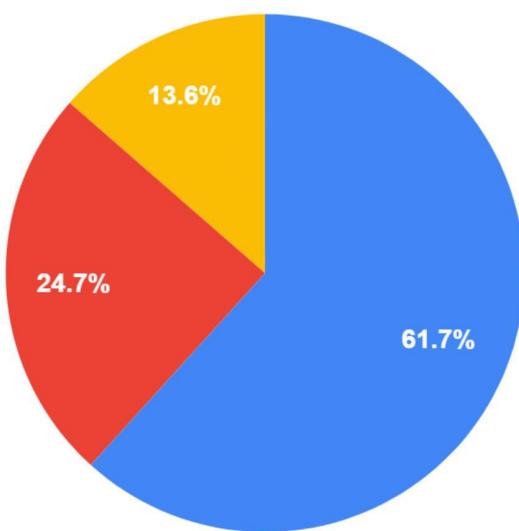
Household Income

● 0-125% FPL ● 125-200% FPL ● Over 200% FPL



Location

● Eugene ● Springfield ● Outside Metro Area



Report and Partial Analysis from Hotline Manager

In the eight months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) had received approximately 200 hotline calls. In November of 2020 we received around 85 calls whereas in November of 2019 we received around 16. In the month of December 2020 we answered 65 calls. In the month of January we answered 84 calls. This month, we received 113 calls.

In the period covered, 41% of our calls mentioned COVID-19 and pandemic related issues as major concerns. Last month, 64% of callers mentioned concerns related to the pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, public unemployment data suggests the vast majority of the unemployed in Lane County are in low-earning sectors of the economy. It is worth highlighting the large number of callers we receive who have disabilities, families with children, or are elders.

As the pandemic continues, calls requesting rent assistance or questioning landlord entry are more common. A large portion of these calls come from elders and/or people with disabilities afraid of contracting COVID. Other callers have reported constant inspections and lease violation notices from landlords that appear to be discriminatory in practice.

Calls about rent assistance, no cause evictions, discrimination, and habitability/repairs continue to be our largest categories. In fact many of the habitability concerns come from elders, people with disabilities, and people on housing assistance programs (like Section 8). We are also seeing an increase in callers receiving 90 day no-cause eviction notices for "landlord reasons." Many callers state that they feel their landlord is serving these notices as a way to make them leave because of the pandemic and concerns about future rent payments.

One extremely concerning example; an elder with disabilities in our community has reported that their landlord put a lock box over their thermostat when Eugene was experiencing an unusually cold weather event this month, preventing them from heating their home. The landlord also has been giving the tenant improper no cause eviction notices, has changed the locks on the unit, and continues to harass this tenant. Because the tenant has issues with mobility and is also receiving housing assistance, they are concerned that they will have nowhere else to go and will become houseless.

Another concerning example is a report of a landlord harassing tenants that are LGBTQIA+. The tenants have reported bi-weekly inspections and lease violation notices without just cause, and harassment including the landlord taking pictures of the tenants sleeping in their beds during these inspections. The tenants had no previous issues with this landlord until they put out flags to celebrate Pride Month, directly after this is when they report the harassment started. This landlord is a part of a well known property management company in the Eugene area.

As the pandemic continues, more callers are contacting us in a state of crisis. Thankfully, we have many resources in the community besides SETA (CAHOOTS, Whitebird, SASS, etc) to assist people experiencing a crisis directly in these unprecedented times. Our goal is to continue to provide resources and information to tenants while gathering data to show trends in our community at large.

With questions contact:
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