



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council
6401 SE Foster • Portland, OR 97206

March 4, 2021

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 282. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon State Council. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

SEIU strongly supports SB 282 to extend the grace period for back rent repayment and ensure tenant stability/protections. We believe that no one should have to worry about keeping a roof over their loved ones' head or where they are going to sleep at night, especially nowadays as Oregon is currently experiencing increasingly dangerous wildfire seasons and navigating a respiratory pandemic. Both disasters which have severely impacted the homes and lives of our members; many of whom are low-income frontline workers.

Throughout this pandemic, our members have been doing the work that is deemed essential for our state to properly function. And yet, it is our low-income and BIPOC workers who have borne the economic brunt of the pandemic both because they are most likely to have lost income, are more likely to rent their homes, or are more likely to have contracted COVID. It is unjust to ask them to support us as they repeatedly put their health at risk and yet not support them when it comes to their housing situation.

Renters need more time to pay back rent. It is inconceivable to expect renters, like our members, to get fully caught up by July. We need protection from COVID-era black marks on our credit and rental history, and protection from landlord retaliation. During this ongoing emergency, we need the ability to share housing when it's necessary, without risking eviction. This bill will stabilize renter households, and ensure that there is time for state and federal rent assistance to reach landlords and resolve back rent debt.

An estimated 11-16% of renters have fallen behind on rent. With dim prospects for recovering lost income, renting Oregonians need more time to stabilize their 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, and aren't unfairly evicted after the moratorium ends. A temporary setback during COVID shouldn't make it impossible to rent in the future.

As we move into the next stage of the COVID pandemic, we must acknowledge the ongoing difficulty that continues to face our most vulnerable communities. We must act to ensure that the fallout from the COVID pandemic does not sentence Oregonians who rent their homes to lasting collateral consequences. We need to support our low-wage workers and renters now more than ever. We urge you to pass SB 282-1.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU, Oregon State Council