

March 22, 2020

To Oregon Legislature or relevant committee on housing:

It would be a mistake to assume that all landlords can afford to cover routine living expenses during a time when renters cannot afford to pay rent. As the owner of one rental property and co-owner of two others, I've been thinking about the urgent problem of financial survival — both for renters and for owners. In my case for example -- home mortgage payments are significant, and rental income from the co-owned houses is shared. I am 74 years old.

I don't yet know how many of my renters will be able to pay rent, but a few have asked about the idea of doing something to be helpful instead. This signals that they anticipate difficulty but still want to live up to their agreements. I know that their work places have been at least temporarily closed.

A few years ago, a program ran through Looking Glass for youth under 23 who needed temporary rent support in between jobs. The program relied on grant funds that didn't continue after a year. It could have become a model, reaching out to renters of any age who need temporary income support. The program verified the loss of income and the cost of rent, then sent a check to cover the monthly rent directly to the property owner. The program director got to know the situations of young renters who needed support. Sometimes she simply helped by writing a check, and sometimes the program went further with job search assistance & training.

I fully approve of a ban on evictions during this crisis. At the same time, it's important for the legislature to recognize the whole picture with regard to housing. That includes the fact that property owners (some no longer young) with just a few rentals really rely on the stability of this income.

Sincerely,

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