

Yesterday, Multnomah County and City of Portland held a joint press conference to announce their plan for keeping people housed during the public health crisis.

Their plan was absolutely inadequate.

It is not sufficient to only protect renters from eviction for a limited time yet expect them to be able to pay back the rent THAT THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO PAY DUE TO LOST WAGES, or be subject again to eviction.

This is deferred sentencing, not relief.

Housing is a human right and there is no excuse for leaving any human being unhoused. But during this public health emergency, it is all of us who will pay the price for these bad public policies. Keeping people safely separated from one another is key to limiting the overflow of our health systems, which are on track to be at capacity within a month. The death toll will be substantial, and while - as usual - the working class would suffer the brunt of this, no demographic will be spared.

Where our local government will not act, our state government must, and provide real, meaningful relief to all. There must be NO conflict of interest between workers protecting themselves and their community through social distancing and self-isolation, and keeping a roof over their heads and the heads of their families. It is unconscionable that the working class should continue to suffer during this time of crisis while the rentier class continue to profit.

What we need, immediately, for everyone in the state:

- a FULL eviction moratorium on ALL non-safety-related evictions.
- no burden on renters to "prove" they're affected by the COVID crisis
- a full rent HOLIDAY for the month of April (or longer if the crisis continues), with NO expectation that it be paid back.
- no means testing for renters
- housing, not shelters! The state must use emergency powers to get our houseless into hotels.

This is not a complete solution. Obviously, there are landlords who in turn will be hurting as a result of the lack of income. But relief for landlords should be considered /in addition to/ the necessary protections to keep people housed and all pulling in the best interest of the community, not /in opposition/ to it.

This is a public health emergency the likes of which we have not seen in over a hundred years. You have a moral duty to act to protect the lives of all Oregonians.

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