



May 22, 2020

House Interim Committee on Housing  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Fahey  
Vice Chair Meek  
Vice Chair Zika

Chair Fahey and members of the committee: Good afternoon, and thank you for inviting me to speak today on behalf of Oregon's landlord industry.

My name is Jim Straub. I've been a landlord for 30 years and come to you today speaking as the Legislative Director for the Oregon Rental Housing Association. We consist of 14 local chapters with over 7,000 members located throughout the entire state. From La Grande to Coos Bay and Klamath Falls to Portland, we truly represent all of Oregon.

How are landlords responding to the Covid-19 crisis? Well, the best we can, honestly. But, overwhelmingly with compassion and flexibility to our customers (the residents) that live in our properties. We understand that this is neither of our doings. We are all in this together, and taking a hardline approach does nothing but exacerbate tensions and frayed nerves.

We understand the stress and uncertainty this crisis brings upon those living in our housing. We are trying to communicate more, and offer reassurance whenever possible. We do fear for our residents' ability to make their payments, particularly in the coming months. While most are paying their rent, we know that many other bills are being left unpaid. Expenses are piling up, and a cascade effect of nonpayments might soon be on the horizon. We hope this is avoidable.

Landlords are struggling as well. Maintenance costs are higher due to increased utility and facility usage during the stay-at-home order. The number of contractors willing to do work on occupied units is significantly less, and when they are available, they are sometimes charging a premium for their service. We, as landlords, have a legal and moral obligation to maintain the properties in habitable condition. In some cases, tenants are reporting failures of appliances, fixtures or essential services but because of their fear of the virus, are refusing to allow contractors to even enter the property. This creates a compounding effect of deferred maintenance and escalating damage.

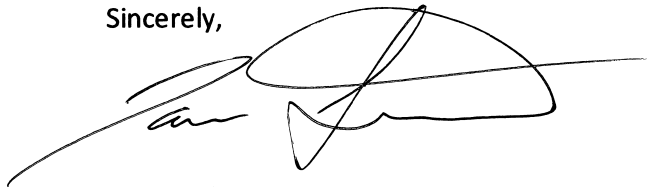
I am hopeful that you will help prevent further housing instability and commit a significant portion of the Coronavirus Relief funds to housing needs such as rent or utility assistance. The eviction moratorium that Governor Brown issued will stop immediate displacement of tenants, but only until the order ends. What happens then? We fear that tenants will be placed in certain economic peril and simply will not be able to catch up on living expenses. All the while, property owners' utilities, insurance, and tax payments

are all still coming due. Homes still need to be maintained, and less rent coming in coupled with higher maintenance costs, significantly increases the risk of foreclosure to home owners. Landlords losing their properties, or not having the money to maintain them, helps no one in this already troubled time.

Earlier this afternoon, you heard testimony from John VanLandingham with the Oregon Law Center. As an attorney and advocate, he requested legislation on behalf of tenants to address the effects of the pandemic. I would like to say that I generally support his proposal, and hope that strong consideration will be given to the mutual benefits his suggestions will have for tenants and landlords alike.

Thank you very much for your time and for your service to our citizens and state during these challenging days.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Straub", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Jim Straub  
Legislative Director  
Oregon Rental Housing Association