

To: Joint Interim Committee On The Third Special Session of 2020

December 17, 2020

Deborah Sposito

Landlord in support of Legislative Concept 18

Portland, Oregon

Dear Co-Chairs President Courtney & Speaker Tina Kotek, Co-Vice Chairs Sen. Girod and Rep. Drazen and members of the Committee:

I am writing today as a community minded small landlord and Oregonian to strongly support [Legislative Concept 18](#). A critical bill that would extend the eviction moratorium through the school year and provide \$150 million from the State's General Fund for a landlord compensation fund and \$50 million for rental assistance to provide protection to both renters and landlords against financial losses from back rent.

I appreciate the diligence with which all of you approach your public work. With a vacuum at the federal level your jobs have become that much harder and crucial to protect Oregonians during a worsening pandemic.

To start evictions at the end of this month would be catastrophic for Oregonians and the state itself, it would be gross negligence on the part of the state and intentionally inflict harm on our neighbors. Long before COVID, Oregon had a housing crisis which is why, in 2017, I decided to build an affordable housing project in NW Portland. I partnered with developer [Kevin Cavanaugh of Guerrilla Development](#) to deliver, in perpetuity, 14 affordable housing units to single mothers and their children. I spoke to Kevin and he is in support of extending the eviction moratorium. I partner with [JOIN](#) and have worked in immigrant and refugee communities in Oregon with the [Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization/IRCO](#) and the [Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice](#). I am deeply alarmed by the evictions' disproportionate impact on communities of color, newcomers and women and children.

If landlords evict, they will get no guarantee of rental income. Plus, they will incur the costs of eviction proceedings. 80% of rents is significantly better than no rental income at all and even better, preventing financial ruin and homelessness for 20,000 to 40,000 fellow Oregonians. The implementation of a landlord compensation fund in the event renters aren't able to pay all or part of their rent is critical. Both smaller landlords and renters need help now.

No one in the state will benefit from an increase in the homeless population. From the business sector to health care to the worsening of already low statewide high school graduation rates and education outcomes. There are severe public health and public safety consequences to evictions -- for example, an increase in vulnerability for women and girls in Oregon: [Rose Haven Women and Childrens Day Shelter](#) has found an 86% increase in the women and children served in last 6 years; and the rate of homeless women in Multnomah County has increased 16% since 2015 which is a statistic that fails to capture women impacted by COVID.

The [Women's Foundation of Oregon Count Her In Report on Violence against Girls and Women in the state of Oregon](#), documents that when women and girls are on the streets or in temporary housing, incidents of sexual abuse, assault and trafficking increase dramatically. "In 2015, requests for emergency shelter from more than 10,000 domestic violence survivors went unmet due to lack of funding (pg 1)." Most women's shelters report that it was challenging pre-pandemic to find safe and affordable housing for survivors in the Portland rental market:

see [Raphael House - Housing Support](#). The news that it is people of color and women who are losing their jobs and leaving the workforce at rates higher than white men is an alarming and dangerous development, see [Historic layoffs take biggest toll on Blacks, Latinos, women and the young](#) and [OPB Oregon Jobs Data](#). As we understand from the data, for women from BIPOC and new comer backgrounds, this pandemic has put them at unprecedented levels of risk, see [KGW - People of Color More Impacted by COVID](#).

Why this bill needs to pass:

1. Smaller landlords need help now. This bill puts money in landlords' pockets immediately, and it's the smaller landlords who need the help with mortgages, repairs & maintenance and taxes.
2. Recognize COVID is not going away anytime soon. Evictions would cause numerous catastrophic social and public health problems across communities in our entire state. This bill needs to be strengthened as Reimagine Oregon has proven, evictions would further disenfranchise Black, Indigenous and People of Color and put extreme stress and burden on these historically disenfranchised individuals.
3. Renters need immediate help as there has been little federal relief since the end of July. Give people more time to pay back rent. Provide protections for renters who have been unable to pay full rent. Think & act interconnected -- both renters and small landlords need help now.

Housing is an issue that is close to my heart and my family's. We are committed to ensuring our neighbors have access to safe and affordable housing. My late father was a community oriented landlord in NW Portland for over 50 yrs. He watched with deep conflict as it became a destination neighborhood where those who worked at Trader Joe's, Coffee People or Chapman Elementary School could no longer afford to live.

Thank you for your work during these difficult times. Now more than ever, we need continuous access to affordable housing and protections for renters and small landlords. Please consider the gravity and extensive nuances of starting evictions. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,
Deborah Sposito
Portland, Oregon

Input from around Oregon:

"The COVID-19 pandemic will long be remembered as a crisis of the working poor, and tragically it has affected our Latinx, Black, elderly and disabled populations the most. With an extension of the moratorium and financial assistance, people in our community would be able to stave off displacement and stay safe at home as the vaccines arrive and are distributed," says Jimmy Jones, ED of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency. He says extending the moratorium combined with the landlord compensation fund will provide much needed relief to the people he serves in Marion and Polk County.

"Between 20,000 and 40,000 Oregon households will be at risk for eviction if Oregon doesn't take action. As the pandemic rages on it is getting more difficult for families and individuals to keep up with rent in the face of lost or reduced wages," statement by Stable Homes for Oregon Families.

Oregon lawmakers need to "...take action to extend the eviction moratorium and create a landlord compensation fund to ensure that COVID doesn't bring a lifelong economic setback for Oregon working families," says Alison McIntosh of the Oregon Housing Alliance. "All Oregonians - White, Black or Brown, rural or urban - need safety and stability for their families through the end of the school year and there needs to be rental assistance available for tenants and landlords to help."

"Too many Oregonians are looking to the New Year with unnecessary dread as COVID has left them with looming evictions or back due rent. Imagine trying to do at-home schooling during COVID from a shelter, or your car. One in five of Oregon renting families with children say they have low confidence they can make next month's rent. 40% of Hispanic/Latino renters, 31% of Black renters and 27% of renters over 55 years old say the same. Come January, if they can't pay rent, these Oregonians risk being on the streets if we don't take action. Lawmakers must extend the eviction moratorium and give people a fair chance to catch up on their rent after the COVID crisis is over." Chris Bonner, realtor and JOIN board member, The Love Portland Group, Hasson Company.

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