



December 17, 2020

Joint Interim Committee On The Third Special Session of 2020
Re: Yes on LC-18

Good evening Co-Chairs Senator Courtney & Speaker Kotek, members of the Committee.

Thank you for your work on the eviction moratorium, which I speak in support of extending. I am the executive director of Street Roots, a newspaper in Portland that works with more than 800 people each year who experience homelessness and housing insecurity.

Thank you for your work on the eviction moratorium, and I speak to night in support of this bill to extend that moratorium.

These past nine months have been relentless for people already on the streets, or newly homeless. Many services receded in the pandemic and people, already in the daily public health crisis of homelessness, fend for now for surviving a pandemic, too. The work on the frontlines of homelessness is extremely intense, and we are all aware that, for as many people who are unhoused, there are exponentially more who are on the brink of homelessness.

Eviction is the fulcrum between housing and homelessness, and it is in your power with this eviction moratorium to tip that balance toward housing. It can tip so quickly, and once it does, new damage is done that is difficult to [reverse](#).

Last winter, just before the pandemic, I walked upon a woman in Portland's Old Town. She wore all blue. Even her sun glasses were blue. And it was as if she sat between two mountain ranges of possessions on either side of her -- tarped mounds and suitcases and bags.

I realized I was seeing her in her first day of homelessness.

She had just been evicted.

She had nowhere to go, and she couldn't go anywhere, anyway, because she was anchored in place by all she owned. For better or worse, our organization did store her

possessions in our basement that day, because at least, that woman could move from the immediate dangers of sleeping on the streets – even by riding a bus all night.

I remember that moment thinking: that's what it looks like when the walls fall down, when the shelter goes away, and a person transforms from a who is housed to one is homeless. I wish we could rewind the tape of history to the day before the eviction.

Eviction is the fulcrum between homelessness and housing and it's not easy to reverse that process. Traumas pile-up. Mental health breaks down. Family ties fray. Sometimes people self-medicate away the terror of it all and people undergo new violences, including, unfortunately, early death.

This is a moment when all of you have the opportunity to make a choice whether or not we allow tens of thousands more people become homeless -- or we can rewind that tape before it ever happens. I urge you to pass LC 18.

Sincerely,

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