



June 24, 2020

Joint Committee on the First Special Session of 2020
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for HB 4213

Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Vice Chair Girod, Co-Vice Chair Drazan, and Members of the Committee:

In 2020, after working in partnership for three years, Children First for Oregon (CFFO) and The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon (CTFO) merged to form **Our Children Oregon (OCO)**. OCO's mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. We elevate data and the voices of communities to amplify the need and collaboratively develop policy and public investments to improve overall child and family well-being across the state. We continue to convene the Children's Agenda, a partnership of 120 organizations, looking at the holistic needs of children.

As you convene in the First Special Session of 2020, most of the issues being addressed through the Legislative Concepts under consideration are not new. Prior to COVID, challenges existed around economic stability and housing; COVID-19 has spotlighted these issues.

Children need to live in economically secure families with stable housing. For too many of our children, that was not the case before the pandemic, and at this moment in time, too many families are facing the threat of eviction. Below is a snapshot of data of our pre-COVID normal.

- In Oregon, three out of four households with extremely low incomes pay over half of their income towards rent.
- Over 22,000 students in Oregon's K-12 schools last school year faced housing instability and were found to "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."
- Children often enter foster care for multiple reasons. One factor tracked by the Department of Human Services is inadequate housing and the stress that puts on families. The number of removals including housing instability has been growing over the last four years from 13.1% in 2015 to 19.7% in 2018.

Now more than ever, families need stable housing.

HB 4213 Eviction Moratorium is essential to address the concern of many families about what happens when rent comes due on July 1. We are all living in very uncertain times, and every Oregon child deserves a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home. We all need a place to shelter and stay safe with ourselves and our families, especially right now. Housing stability has never been more important than during this pandemic. **We ask that you enact a strong eviction moratorium and repayment period that will prevent people from losing their homes.**

This proposal is certainly a significant change to how our housing system has historically worked, but we know that our pre-COVID housing system was not working for too many Oregon families. As you consider this and other legislation during this upcoming Special Session, we urge you to be open to what is possible in regards to COVID-19 responses, because we shouldn't be thinking about going back to normal. Our pre-COVID normal was not working for too many of our children, and we should use this opportunity to do better. As James Baldwin wrote in the early 1960s, "In our time, as in every time, the impossible is the least one can demand." Please remember this when told something is impossible or can't be done.

We ask you at this moment to center the children of Oregon and to make the best decisions to ensure an equitable recovery, and we urge you to support HB 4213 and enact a strong eviction moratorium and repayment period that will prevent people from losing their homes.

Let's reimagine the world we want to live in and make it real with each decision we make!

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Chris Coughlin
Legislative Director

Jenifer Wagley
Executive Director