



December 18th, 2020

Joint Interim Committee on the Third Special Session of 2020
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of LC 18 –Extension of Eviction Moratorium & Rental Assistance Program

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

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon¹ strongly supports LC 18. The global COVID 19 pandemic has intensified socio-economic injustices facing BIPOC communities, and this bill is essential for our communities to avoid a wave of displacement and homelessness that we have no ability to deal with and that would have a devastating impact on families and individuals. **We are especially supportive of:**

- **Extension of the eviction moratorium.** The safest place for people to be in a pandemic is safe at home. Families and individuals will be at higher risk of COVID if they lose their homes and our communities will have increased spread of this terrible disease. Incidences of COVID-19 have risen in states that lifted moratoriums at 2.1 times the rate of states that maintained them. Deaths increased by 5.4 times. Until there are vaccines for everyone, the best prevention during the pandemic is a safe place to stay, which is why eviction moratoriums were put in place. The eviction moratorium should be extended through June of 2021, at least.
- **The \$200 million dollar landlord compensation & rental assistance fund.** There should be a landlord compensation fund that helps smaller landlords with back rent so they won't have to evict if they are in financial straits, and also a rental assistance fund to help those tenants who will need assistance moving forward or whose landlords don't apply for the fund. The [most recent data shows](#) that in Oregon roughly 27,700 households face risk of eviction if the moratorium is not extended with an estimated rent shortfall of between \$155 to 274 million. The \$150 landlord compensation fund and the \$50 million tenant assistance package will go a long way to ensuring that families can stay safe in their home during the COVID pandemic until we have more vaccines for everyone.

Our Black and Brown neighbors are at the greatest risk of lifelong harm from the COVID evictions, and have historically been the targets of discriminatory and racist housing policies and practices. For example, according to the U.S. Census Pulse Survey, 30% of Black renters are at risk of eviction because of concerns they can't pay next month's rent. **Amendments we would like to see to address issues facing our Black and Brown communities include:**

¹ The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 45,000 members and supporters statewide.

- Accountability mechanism for landlords using the compensation fund to ensure they tried their best to keep renters for which they received rental assistance;
- Mandated communication from landlord to tenants letting them know that they have to file a form to qualify for the moratorium;
- Requirement of renters submitting a form to qualify should be removed. Landlords should be able to apply for relief for all of their tenants, not just a select few. The burden this places on the tenant is unnecessary;
- Requirement of third party mediation on any eviction after the landlord receives assistance.

Under the current law, people could start losing their homes as soon as January 11th and at that point under current projections, we won't have enough vaccines for everyone and we will still be in a suppressed economy. The Oregon Department of Justice earlier this month testified that January will bring an immediate filing of 14,000 non-payment cases. These tenants will lose unless the eviction moratorium is extended. The winter surge of COVID cases brought reduced economic activity and new layoffs and hours reduction. Even before that happened, according to September research by PSU and Community Alliance of Tenants, 47% of Oregonians were using credit cards or borrowing money to meet their basic needs and 53% have cut back on paying for food or medicine to pay rent.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support LC 18. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Andrea Valderrama | Policy Director

American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon

Phone: (503) 706-8510 | Email: avalderrama@aclu-or.org

PO Box 40585, Portland, OR 97240

www.aclu-or.org

