

a voice for commercial lease reform

Hello,

I write this as a former member of the Portland small business community, and I hope you have a moment to hear a plea from a voice that speaks for many. I owned a retail clothing store for eleven years that closed due to the Covid pandemic. From March 27th, the first day we closed, to June of 2020, I plead with my landlords to negotiate reduced rent, to no avail. In fact, I never received a single response. After working with a lawyer who reviewed my lease, I understood the gravity of the situation; I had signed myself as a personal guarantee on my commercial lease. At the time I signed my lease, I was fairly new to business, and didn't have the experience to sense a bad deal. If that lease crossed my desk today, I would understand that it was an impossible one sided contract that left no room for situations such as Covid. I have lost my business, my PUA is ending next week, I have no income, and am now being sued by my landlords. They served me papers three weeks ago for two months of rent. My lawyer said they are most likely going to sue me every couple of months in case a commercial moratorium goes back into effect. On top of that there is a clause in my lease stating I will pay for all legal fees if I lose in litigation.

I have put forth two settlement offers which they have declined, stating they will accept the full amount, \$90,000. My offer was \$30,000, which I now no longer have. I want to stress, I understand landlords have a right to the income they earn from leases, however, in dire times like these a compromise should not be withheld, it should be expected. I paid my rent on time, if not prior, for five and a half years, not once paying late. I routinely informed my landlords of building maintenance needed. A running toilet? I called them. Graffiti? I called. I appreciate the time our community has invested in residential lease reform; I am asking for Oregon to address the inequalities in commercial leases.

Thank you for your time.

Charlotte

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