

Support for LC 18, extending eviction moratorium and the rental assistance program.

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

Re: Support for LC 18, extending eviction moratorium and the rental assistance program.

For the record, my name is Jensi Albright, I work for the Community Alliance of Tenants as the Membership Manager and I am testifying in support of LC18 though I'm truly disappointed that LC18 doesn't actually help as many tenants who need it in Oregon and it definitely doesn't go far enough. However, having said that - I would like to express support this bill because we'll have a humanitarian crisis that will be a nightmare for Oregon without extending the evictions moratorium - and this is the moment to act, That is essential for the health and well being of the people we serve and for our community to avoid a wave of displacement and homelessness in our state that we have no ability to deal with and that would have a devastating impact on families and individuals.

In the first couple of months of the pandemic, we reached out to all our current tenant members to see how they were doing and the stories were heartbreaking then - we found so many people had had an abrupt loss of income and yet they were doing everything possible to keep up with the rent and keep themselves housed. We also did a wider survey of Oregon tenants beyond only CAT members - and **found that nearly 80% of tenants had paid full or partial rent each month but in order to do that - 52% were emptying their savings**, selling all their belongings, cutting back on medicines, food and basic necessities. I have heard from many landlords that their tenants just decided not to pay rent anymore during the pandemic as though that is common. I'm sorry but, respectfully, I have to call that out as just a fiction or perhaps those are a few isolated cases.

Overwhelming me this year has been hearing what CAT's base are doing to survive and to get the rent paid - the most underrepresented tenants - low income Black Indigenous, People of Color, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees are suffering to an even more alarming degree than white low income tenants. The pain in these conversations is palpable.

This week I talked to a mom who applied for unemployment in February - and still hasn't gotten it. And her adult kids have so much anxiety this year, it has aggravated underlying mental health issue to the point where her daughter attempted suicide in the last month. They are barely keeping it together with thousands upon thousands of accumulated rent debt.

Another latinx mom who can't get most assistance due to her immigration status who suffered anxiety attacks to the point of going to the ER. Her family has no safety net anymore after exhausting all of their hard-earned savings and they still don't have the income back for any unforeseen expenses.

So many latinx families moving in together in apartments doubling and tripling up - and getting hit with covid as it just tears through them all in that space.

And so many stories of rent increases and landlords harassing tenants for the rent debt when the tenants are already at their breaking points.

I have heard landlords speak of losing their retirement savings due to tenants' nonpayment of rent - as though tenants are preying on their generosity. The fact is the tenants that I'm talking to - have been living paycheck to paycheck prior to this year and then they lost their incomes completely and can't catch back up. I feel like those landlords need to realize that the stress of being vulnerable as tenants right now has taken a deep toll on the mental health of Oregon. Oregon tenants no longer have the safety net that landlords all have.

YOU ARE THE SAFETY NET FOR LOW INCOME OREGON TENANTS!

It's time to figure out a way to really address the accumulated rent debt looming over tenants' heads and truly give tenants the ability to stay housed and recover during and after the pandemic.

Please don't let us down now. Act in support of Oregon tenants, start by passing and improving upon LC18.

Sincerely,
Jensi Albright
Membership Manager
Community Alliance of Tenants

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Jensi Albright

Membership Manager

direct office line: 503-460-9702 x140 (forwarded to cell)

(During pandemic) cell (for texts): 971-344-4945

Renters' Rights Hotline: 503-288-0130

CAT's Portland, Oregon office is located in Multnomah County. We honor the Indigenous people whose traditional and ancestral homelands we stand on: the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tumwater, Watlala bands of the Chinook, the Tualatin Kalapuya and many other Indigenous nations of the Willamette and Columbia River regions.

CAT's Southern Oregon office is located in Medford, Oregon in Jackson County.

It is important to acknowledge the ancestors of this land and to recognize that we are here because of genocide forced upon them.

For Renter's Rights Hotline support, please remember to call 503-288-0130.