

Dear House Interim Committee On Housing,

Please extend the eviction moratorium during the December 21st special session. Also, please **remove the requirement for tenants to sign a sworn statement that they have been impacted by Covid-19**. Covid-19 has been devastating for renters. To buy into a narrative that renters are just choosing not to pay rent is deeply offensive and grossly out of touch with the realities renters are navigating right now.

Oregon tenants are being massively impacted by Covid-19. A study by the Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT) and Portland State University found:

- 53% of renters cut back on food and medications to pay rent. Half dipped into savings.
- At least two-thirds reported paying their rent in full each month since March. But the number has declined from over 90% in March to 67% in July.
- 34.8% of tenants now owe back rent and 56% of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) tenants owe back rent.
- Among those owing back rent, half have made partial payments during the pandemic.
- 84% of tenants are experiencing mental or physical stress due to housing insecurity.

Further, about 88,000 Oregon renter households said they had "no confidence" they could pay rent for December. 49% of those are BIPOC and 44% have kids (US Census Bureau PULSE survey).

The sworn statement is racially unjust and will disproportionately hurt BIPOC families.

The sworn statement is deeply racially unjust and will negatively impact BIPOC communities, immigrant communities, Black, Indigenous, and people whose first language is not English. This added burden is a form of institutional racism and systemic structural violence. Native and Black communities especially have historical trauma related to being manipulated into signing papers which were then used to dispossess them of their lands and housing.

This requirement goes against Oregon's stated goals to promote Equity and Racial Justice. This requirement to sign "under penalty of perjury", is intimidating to BIPOC and non-native English speakers who are not familiar with the legal system or who have been unfairly targeted and oppressed by law enforcement, the judicial system and criminal legal system. The legal system has unjustly dispossessed Native and Black communities for centuries and this requirement will have a "chilling effect" causing BIPOC people who have been impacted by Covid-19 not to get the benefit of the protections they are entitled to.

The sworn statement is unnecessary, cruel, harmful, and confusing to tenants.

The sworn statement is being presented as so broad and all encompassing that anyone who signs it will meet the qualification. This shows how unnecessary it is and that the requirement is just a legal "gotcha" meant to screw predominantly BIPOC people out of their right to remain in housing during a pandemic. People are struggling right now and adding an additional hurdle (signing the sworn statement) is cruel and harmful. Additionally, landlords with ill intent are already tricking tenants into signing away their Oregon eviction moratorium protections by having them sign onto weaker CDC protections. We need to keep it clear for tenants already navigating so many difficult situations, these protections are universal and DO NOT require any signatures.

Please pass the eviction moratorium extension without any requirement to sign a sworn statement.

Sincerely,

Julia McKenna