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Statement in Support of LC 18, Extending the Statewide Eviction Moratorium to the Joint Interim Committee of the third Special Session of 2020

This year has been especially challenging for the people we serve at the Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center.

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected the Latinx communities of Washington and Yamhill counties, with infection rates three times higher than the general population and increased job loss due to pandemic shut downs. The looming end of the statewide eviction moratorium would have disastrous results for these communities, bringing more illness, hospitalizations, and death as well as displacement and homelessness to people who have already suffered so much.

Eviction moratoriums were put in place primarily as a public health measure when the CDC issued a directive clearly stating that evictions of tenants could be detrimental to public health control measures aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19. As the CDC stated, moratoriums like the one we have in Oregon, facilitate self-isolation by people who become ill or who are at risk for severe illness from COVID-19. They make possible our stay home, stay safe policies. Housing stability helps protect public health because homelessness increases the likelihood of individuals moving into congregate settings, such as with families or friends, increasing COVID risk for everyone. If displacement results in moving to a homeless shelter, the risk of COVID-19 greatly increases.

The Journal of Urban Health further supports this with a national comparison survey of states that lifted their moratorium earlier this year versus those that kept it in place. States that lifted eviction protections had 2.1 times more COVID spread and a more than 5 times higher mortality rate. In other words, lifting the moratorium in Oregon would be a death sentence for too many people and the communities we serve would be the most vulnerable.

In addition, without financial assistance that helps both renters and landlords and protection from eviction, low-wage workers will be under tremendous pressure to earn money even if it is dangerous for themselves to do so. Workplace outbreaks of COVID continue to rage in Oregon at food processing plants and other facilities that force people to work closely together while offering little PPE or other protections.

Please, vote yes on LC 18 to extend the statewide eviction moratorium and provide financial assistance. Individuals living on the edge like so many in our communities right now should not have to choose between going to work when they are sick or losing their home forever.