



Co-chair Courtney, Co-chair Kotek, and members of the committee thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight in favor of LC 18. For the record, my name is Tim Morris, Board President of the Springfield Eugene Tenant Association. SETA is a non-profit dedicated to empowering tenants in our community. Our free Hotline educates tenants regarding their rights/protections and connects them with local resources. Not only has service quickly become fundamentally important in our community, but the data we collect with this direct connection to tenants is an invaluable tool in gleaming information on what tenants are facing every day.

Our call data reflects that during this pandemic, nearly half of the calls we receive are concerns about **No-cause and for-cause evictions**, more than twice as likely as any other reason for a tenant to call us. Many of our callers have exhausted all resources, including financial assistance, to continue paying their rent and staying in their homes. I will be submitting a detailed Hotline Report with local data we have collected, which highlights the extreme duress tenants are currently in.

It is my strong opinion that the Oregon State Legislature must take immediate action in passing LC 18 to prevent a catastrophic wave of evictions in our community. Tenants are vastly over-represented in industries hit hardest by the pandemic, especially foodservice and retail. The Oregon Department of Justice earlier this month testified, if no action is taken, there will be an immediate filing of 14,000 non-payment cases. Families could start losing their homes as soon as January 11th during a global pandemic, an economic crisis, and immediately following devastating wildfires - through no fault of their own. **If the eviction moratorium is allowed to lapse and no additional resources provided, tens of thousands of tenants will be evicted and irreversible damage will be done.**

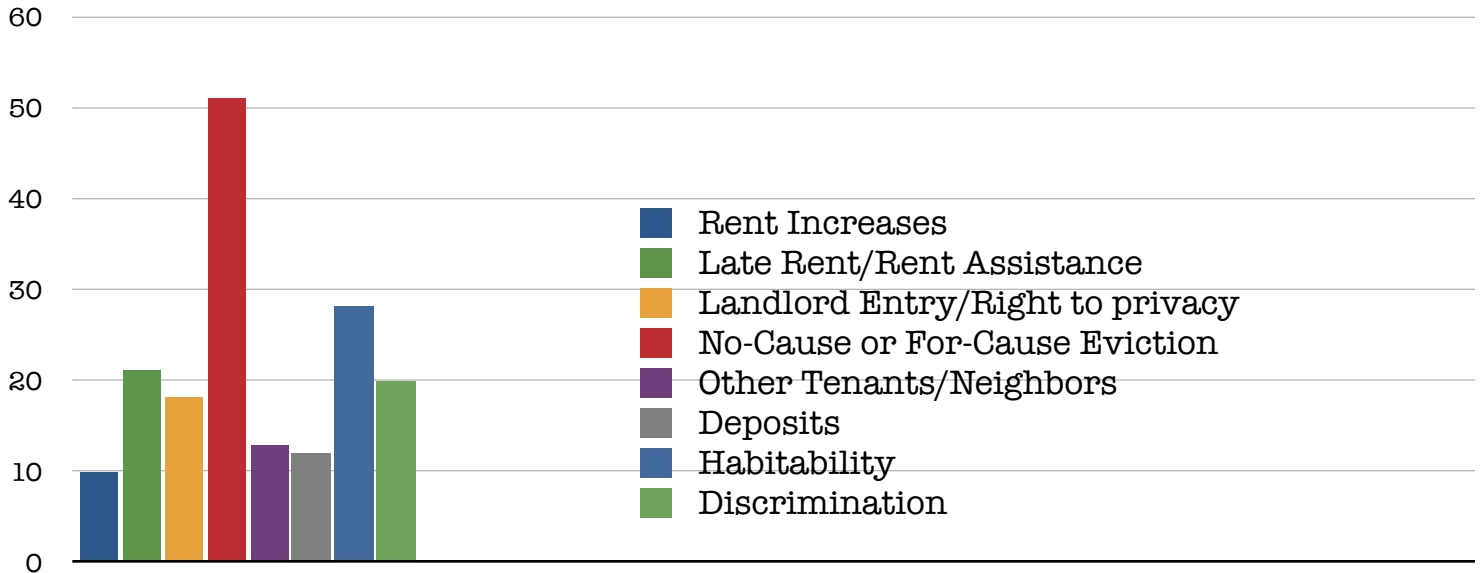
SETA is prepared and ready to educate our community in what resources are available to them, but first we need available resources to direct them to. Please, we beg you, vote yes on LC 18 and help us keep people safe and in their homes.



Mission Statement:
Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) is a 501c3 non-profit, public service organization that is dedicated to renters' rights and interests. We accomplish our goals by assisting, educating, and empowering tenants in the Springfield-Eugene area. We believe that housing rights are human rights and that affordable and accessible housing are the foundation of any strong community.

SETA Hotline Update Oct 20th-Nov 30th 2020

Approximate Number of Calls in Top Categories*



No-Cause and For-Cause Evictions ~ 51:

Highest percentage of our calls to date
Many for-cause calls including 3 or more with court dates or actual eviction judgments
Some non-payment from before the pandemic
Many no-cause calls concern confusion around sale of a home

Late Rent/Rent Assistance ~ 21:

Type of call was very rare before the pandemic
Many callers report loss of income

Landlord Entry/Right to privacy ~ 18:

Many callers, often elderly and/or at risk continue to express concerns and fear of people entering their homes
Reports landlords inspecting to look for excuses to give for-cause

Other Tenants ~ 13:

Frequently a roommate desiring another to leave
Some calls related to domestic violence
Reports of attempts to contact law enforcement proving unhelpful because these are civil matters

Rent Increases ~ 10:

Many tenants curious if the moratorium included protection from rent increases

Deposits ~ 12:

Usually refers to a caller feeling a landlord kept all or part of a deposit unjustly/unlawfully
Some reports of landlords claiming "non-refundable" deposit

Habitability ~ 28:

Calls frequently relate to landlords refusing to make repairs
Sometimes security issues such as broken locks
Some callers report landlords using pandemic as excuse for not making repairs

Discrimination ~ 20:

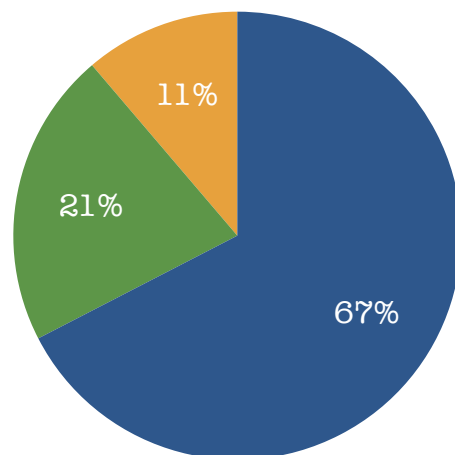
Based on self reports we have heard from people with disabilities, the elderly, voucher holders, families with children, racial minorities, and survivors of domestic violence who believe they are or could be experiencing discrimination

* Approximately 114 total calls, however, sum is higher because calls frequently cover multiple issues

Demographic Information

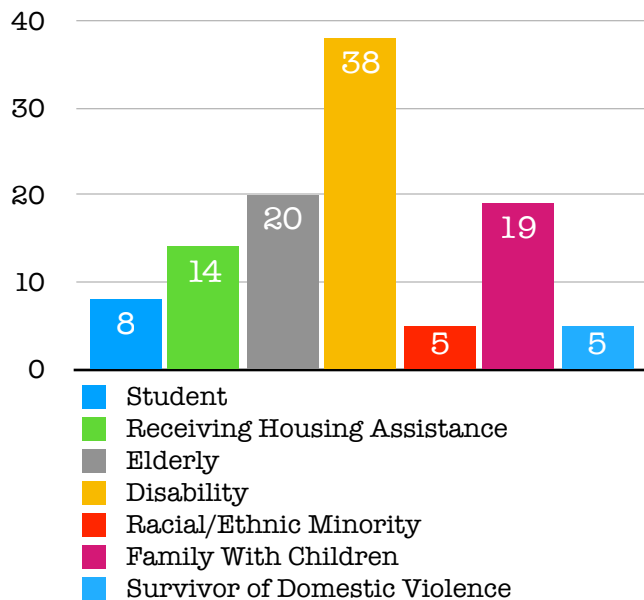
Who Calls in?

Household income demographics and locations are more complete because they represent binary choices that are directly requested from each caller. Most callers are willing to share information about themselves though some decline. Personal demographics are more complicated because callers can represent multiple categories and are not interviewed extensively. Elderly and disability are often co-occurring demographics. Even with the limits on personal demographic collection, our data shows overrepresentation of vulnerable populations.

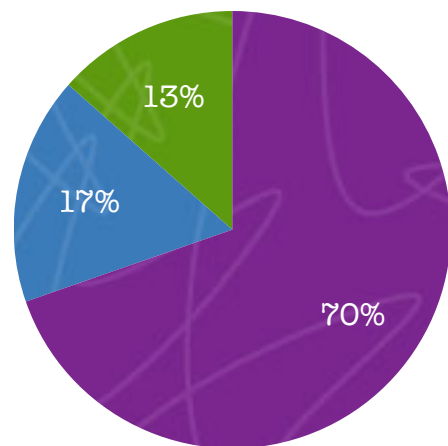


● 0-125% FPL ● 125-200% FPL
● Over 200% FPL

Household Income



Personal Demographics



● Eugene
● Springfield
● Outside Metro Area

Location

Report and Partial Analysis from Hotline Manager

In the eight months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Springfield Eugene Tenant Association (SETA) had received approximately 200 hotline calls. Between October 20th and November 30th SETA received approximately 114 calls. This time period begins where my last report left off. The months of October and November 2020 were the busiest months we have ever had. In November of 2020 we received around 85 calls whereas in November of 2019 we received around 16. These numbers only include calls from tenants with housing questions—not the full range of inquires we are contacted for but do not collect data about.

In the period covered, 40% of our calls mentioned COVID problems and over 50% had a problem potentially related. Since the beginning of the pandemic, public unemployment data suggests the vast majority of the unemployed in Lane County are in low-earning sectors of the economy such as Accommodation and Food Services, Healthcare and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade. The largest numbers of unemployed have a high-school education or less and are under 54 years old. Ample news reports and data show that minorities and people of color are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. All of these demographic groups are also vastly over-represented among Lane County's renter population. It is worth highlighting the large number of callers we receive who have disabilities, families, or are elderly.

Before the pandemic, SETA rarely received calls requesting rent assistance. They are now regular. With waitlists opening and closing quickly we are frequently unable to tell callers much more than to contact their legislators. Note that direct rent assistance is not even a service that we provide.

Calls about tenants wishing to deny entry to their homes came in before the pandemic but were much less regular. As the pandemic continues and COVID-19 cases rise, these calls have become common place. A large portion of these calls come from elderly people and/or people with disabilities afraid of contracting COVID. Other callers fear their landlords want to do inspections in order to come up with reasons to give them eviction notices.

Calls about eviction continue to be our single-largest category. Over the period of this report nearly half our calls concerned eviction. Please let that sink in. This is an increase over previous periods. Despite the moratorium these include instances of 72 hour notices for non-payment. At least one caller reported having a court ordered eviction for non-payment from before the pandemic—having since acquired money that their landlord refused to accept. We spoke to multiple callers who had received court orders for something other than non-payment. More commonly calls involve threats or for-cause notices (sometimes for violations as simple as trash on the premises). Many callers are afraid because they do not understand the difference between a notice and an actual eviction. Other calls were about no-cause termination due to the sale of a home—sometimes simply when it is put on the market, without evidence of a buyer or intended move-in. No-cause termination was a particularly complicated topic before the pandemic given the nature of SB608/ORS90.427; it is further complicated by ever changing moratoriums. Tenants and landlords alike are often confused about their rights and responsibilities regardless of their intent.

It would be unfair not to highlight that we are still receiving an increased number of calls about issues with housemates and neighbors. With more people working from home, and children schooling from home, mental health and other issues are exacerbated. Teachers and mental health providers alike confirm these concerns. Supports and referrals for mental health and mediation are limited. People report contacting the police who do not help with civil matters.

Callers frequently complain about the lack of an enforcement body to report notices, threats, entry they believe to be unlawful, or issues with their housemates. Our region has no housing bureau. With limited resources, lawyers for low-income people are unlikely to help those who have not received actual notices or court summons.

The pandemic continues with little end in sight. Many of our calls border more and more on crisis counseling. Our on the ground experience indicates that Lane County's housing and homelessness crises continue to get worse.

With questions contact:
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