

Testimony for LC18

I am writing to you as a tenant who has experienced multiple periods of unemployment during this pandemic and feared for how I may be able to pay my rent, sick with worry, adding stress to my relationships, negatively impacting my mental health and I am not alone in that worry. PSU's Homelessness Research and Action Collaborative conducted a survey of Oregon renters during COVID-19 and found that 84% of tenants are experiencing mental or physical stress due to housing insecurity.

I am writing to you as someone who has my masters in public health and social work, urging you to vote for action that actually shows that you are committed to equity and the health and wellness of the state you represent. Housing IS a human right. To cause houselessness to occur, you are effectively cutting 20 years off the life expectancy of those individuals. I have worked over five years serving the houseless community in Portland and I can tell you from experience, that even before the negative economic impacts of COVID19, access to affordable housing is dismal and stretched beyond its limits. If the eviction moratorium is not extended AND rent cancellation is not enacted, there will be even more strain on our already faulty safety net systems. For instance, I submitted a pre-application for a client of mine to get on a list of 100 applicants that would then have only a small subset be randomly selected

to be added to the waitlist, which then would mean 3-10 years longer of a wait with needing to jump through administrative hoops to stay on that list every 6 months before they could potentially be approved for an affordable unit. I submitted this PRE-application 20 minutes after the waitlist opened and the 100 applicant limit was already reached by that time. You won't be able to blame transient populations flocking to Portland for our exorbitant houselessness rates or neighboring states who ship their houseless to our Portland with the hopes that we have adequate services to provide for them; the exponential growth in houselessness will be on state and city and county officials hands.

Equity means that you provide assistance based on their need. Yes we are all suffering now and we all need some form of support, but those who OWN have more assets and have the PRIVILEGE to sell their properties; renters are at the whim of their landlords and many of us are going paycheck to paycheck and having to "choose" to not buy their medication or purchase fresh produce in order to keep a shelter over their head. The survey mentioned before found that 53% of renters cut back on food and medications to pay rent. Half dipped into savings. Governor Kate Brown has been focused on reducing smoking prevalence in the state to try to impact health outcomes of our population, but I assure you that enacting policy that would provide affordable and secure housing to Oregon residents

would have a much more profound impact on health outcomes in multiple areas.

If ever there was a time to try something different, it is now. You all have so much power and influence over the mental, physical, spiritual, emotional safety of so many people. Please think of those most in need and extend the eviction moratorium and try something different and cancel rent. You have the power.

Thank you,

Legal Name: Kari Nilsen



--

Xylem Nilsen

Pronouns: they/them ([Trans 101 and Pronoun FAQ resource hyperlink here](#))

Feel free to use the name Xy to refer to me informally (Pronounced like "Zie", which rhymes with "Pie")