



FAMILY FORWARD OREGON

Smart policies for today's families.

December 9, 2021

Testimony in Support of LC 9: Emergency Rental Assistance Policy
Joint Interim Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021

Co-Chair Beyer, Fahey, Co-Vice Chairs Knopp, Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of LC 9. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. We believe having a safe and stable home is a critical component to every family's success – it impacts a family's safety and security, their children's educational outcomes, and contributes to economic stability for the entire family. Stable housing is even more critical during a global pandemic where the safest place for people to be is at home.

During the 2021 session, SB 278 passed with broad bipartisan support so that individuals and families wouldn't be evicted while they waited for state and federal rent assistance to get to the landlord. Due to overwhelming demand, statutory changes are necessary to implement that goal. The Legislature has promised relief to thousands of households, and we need to ensure that promise is kept. We urge passage of the following:

- Provide new funding for continuing access to rent assistance for tenants with low-income through the winter months until new federal resources are available, and for the landlord guarantee fund.
- Modify SB 278's safe harbor period to cover the entire application period, and extend the sunset on protections. Tenants who have applied for assistance should be protected until their application has been considered, and either granted or denied, no matter when they apply.
- Extend the sunset on the current 10-day (as opposed to 72 hour) notice period for nonpayment evictions, coupled with updated notice to tenants about eviction process and where to find rent assistance. This is a common-sense provision that works to facilitate access to available resources designed to prevent displacement.
- Expand and extend the current 60-day landlord guarantee fund to cover any period of time (not just 60 days) if a landlord delays eviction and a tenant is ultimately denied assistance or receives less than is owed when the case is closed. This removes risk for the landlord in ensuring tenant stability and access to assistance.

Since the start of the safe harbor protections in SB 278, nearly 2,300 nonpayment evictions have been filed in Oregon courts. These evictions increase the risk of homelessness and cause



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generational harm to families and individuals.¹ Our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) neighbors are at the greatest risk of lifelong harm from the COVID evictions—it is no different when it comes to the impacts of the pandemic on their housing security. A recent study showed that while tenants continued to pay rent from April into summer, as many as 35% of those surveyed owe back rent. That number increases to 56% for people of color.²

The pandemic is also having disproportionate economic impacts on women. Approximately 865,000 women ages 20 and over, including 324,000 Latinas and 58,000 Black women, dropped out of the workforce in August and September alone³. By February of this year, women were still short of nearly 5.1 million jobs compared to February 2020.⁴ If they lose their homes through eviction, not only will they have a permanent record, but families with children who are hanging on by a thread dealing with long term unemployment will have that thread cut.

No one should be evicted for nonpayment while their rent assistance application is being processed. We must act now to prevent the unnecessary and tragic generational harm that comes from eviction and displacement. We urge you to pass LC 9.

Sincerely,

Lisa Kwon, Policy Manager
Family Forward Oregon

¹ Data from Oregon Law Center Eviction Defense Project

²<https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znlchr1791/files/2020-09/Renters%20in%20Covid-Oregon%20summer%202020.pdf>

³ <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/september-jobs-fs1.pdf>

⁴ <https://nwlc.org/resources/feb-jobs-2021/>