



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

December 10, 2021

Joint Interim Committee On The Second Special Session
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: In favor of rental assistance policy in LC 9

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

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is advancing equitable policymaking and whole-child advocacy statewide to ensure our children and youth have what they need, regardless of their race or where they live, to thrive by activating meaningful change for children and families. OCO is the result of the merger between two historic Oregon non-profits: The Children's Trust Fund of Oregon and Children First for Oregon. We collect, analyze, and elevate data and research that, alongside lived experience, drives conversations in support of Oregon's future. We partner alongside 115+ organizations through The Children's Agenda to uplift and advocate for community-driven, equity-centered policies and investments that will improve the lives of Oregon's children and families.

We must protect kids and families from eviction. In 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. SB 278 was part of the 2021 Children's Agenda, and we ask that those safeguards for renters are maintained to prevent evictions.

The most recent numbers show that more than 7,900 low-income households who have applied for assistance have been waiting so long, their safe harbor period has expired, and they have no legal protection from eviction.¹ More than 24,000 other households are also in the queue, getting closer to their expiration dates every day.²

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.

¹ OHCS News Release, Dec. 8, 2021.

² OHCS Dashboard.

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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- 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.

Oregon children and families need stability. Oregon already has one of the highest rates of student homelessness in the country, and has the third highest rate of unsheltered youth in the country³ causing local shelters to strain at the seams. We need to avoid evictions this winter so that children can be in stable housing. The Oregon Legislature has taken significant and much appreciated steps with the passage of SB 278. It would be tragic if we fell through on that promise and let people face an unfair eviction because money didn't get allocated on time. We cannot allow all the good work we've done to keep people in their homes to fall apart now.

We must ensure continued access to rent assistance in the coming months, and we must act to prevent the generational harm caused by displacement while payments are being made,

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Ivy Major-McDowall, Policy and Advocacy Manager

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the Our Children Oregon at
www.ourchildrenoregon.org

³ "Thousands of homeless youth still in need of housing and services across Oregon, new report finds," Statesman Journal, Nov. 8, 2021.