

***Testimony to the Joint Interim Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021***

December 11, 2021

Co-Chair Beyer, Co-Chair Fahey, Co-Vice Chair Knopp, Co-Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Members of the Committee,

My name is Ruhiyyih Bagley and I am a renter who lives in Aloha. I strongly urge you to pass the proposals in front of you. My story is one of thousands of stories of Oregon renters who have been caught in the economic turmoil of the pandemic and are dependent on the actions of the state to keep us safe and stable in our homes.

As a medically vulnerable person, when the COVID pandemic hit, I had to step back from my job as a therapist working with children and teens on the spectrum. I am a lifelong renter who until last year had never once been late with rent or had any kind of complaint, but after draining my savings, cutting back on foods and medications, and even selling many of my belongings, I eventually fell behind.

I applied for rent assistance on two separate occasions and in the end, I was approved for six full months, but it was an incredibly scary time. I received two eviction notices in five months. My life was in limbo. I was very concerned, at one point, that I really would be evicted, and I worried constantly for weeks about where I would go, and how I would move forward, because evictions stay on your record.

Looking back, I recognize that I was fortunate. My assistance came through. But that isn't the case for thousands and thousands of Oregonians. They have waited, and worried, for months on end. Can you imagine their terror, and the toll that constant stress has taken on their families? I can. And we have all seen the stories of people who have been evicted because their rent assistance hasn't come on time. Where will they go? How will they possibly come up with first month's rent, last month's rent and a security deposit? They could end up living in their cars or in a tent on the street in the dead of winter.

It was wonderful to get the assistance I did. But people are suffering needlessly because they have simply run out of time and are caught in the rent assistance backlog. We need people to be safe from eviction for as long as it takes for their applications to be processed instead of having that protection stop on an arbitrary deadline.

I urge you to act now to prevent more evictions. Allocate new funding for rent assistance to get families through the winter and ensure people are safe from eviction for as long as it takes for applications to be processed.

Thank you.