



December 11, 2021

Joint Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021
900 Court St. NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Beaverton City Council Supports Renter Safe Harbor and Assistance Payment

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and Fahey and Members of the Joint Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021:

The Beaverton City Council applauds the Governor for calling a special session to extend temporary eviction protections for tenants awaiting rental assistance and state lawmakers for their work on a solution to keep Oregonians housed during the coldest winter months and ensure property owners are paid in full for rent owed and applied for by tenants.

More than 10,000 Oregon families are living with the imminent threat of eviction through no fault of their own. They have filed an application for rental assistance but have exceeded their SB 278 (2021) 60-day safe harbor period due to processing backlogs. New applications for assistance continue to come in at a rapid rate, reflecting continued need across Oregon and the State has run out of funds available to pay for new applications. We need additional state resources to ensure communities across Oregon have capacity to pay for new assistance applications submitted during the winter. It is in the best interest of all Oregonians to protect tenant stability while guaranteeing landlords compensation for rent assistance applied for or for any losses in the event a tenant's application is denied.

The Beaverton City Council unanimously passed an ordinance in October 2021 to extend the 60-day safe harbor period granted by SB 278 to 90 days; however, recent data shows the average application processing time by the State for Washington County residents is 115 days – much longer than the 90-day safe harbor passed by the Beaverton City Council. As of November 30, 2021, 66 percent of Washington County applications (4,353) to the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program were in the system awaiting review or landlord or tenant response, with each application inching closer to or past their expiration dates every day. This places numerous families, particularly Oregon's Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) families who have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, at threat of eviction during one of the most challenging times faced by our state. Washington County applications to Community Action of Washington County take an average of 65 days, with some applications taking as little as four weeks, but others take up to 120 days depending on completion of application and documents from both the renter and landlord.

We urge lawmakers to act so that Oregonians who have applied for rental assistance from state and local agencies are protected from eviction while their applications are being processed and ensure adequate resources to enable payment of ongoing applications through the winter.

The Beaverton City Council urges the legislature to:

- Extend safe harbor protections for all who've applied for rental assistance
- Ensure landlords will be paid in full for past-due rent based on applications for assistance
- Approve additional rental assistance for low-income tenants, and
- Invest additional funds to transition pandemic-related emergency rental assistance programs into long-term eviction prevention services.

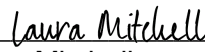
Evictions have life-altering consequences and further exacerbate the impacts of systemic disparities suffered largely by people of color and low-income communities. It is very difficult to maintain employment or schooling when there is no housing stability. Oregon already has one of the highest rates of unsheltered homelessness in the nation and one of the highest rates of student homelessness. If we fail to act now, a renewed displacement crisis will hit at an extremely precarious phase in the pandemic. Nonpayment evictions while assistance applications are pending are entirely preventable and Oregonians are counting on the Legislature to act during the special session.

Thank you for the opportunity to lend our support to your efforts. We look forward to working in partnership with you to keep people in their homes and reduce what is already a crisis of homelessness on our streets.

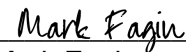
Sincerely,



Lacey Beaty
Mayor



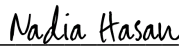
Laura Mitchell
City Council President



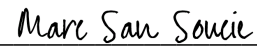
Mark Fagin
City Councilor



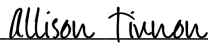
Ashley Hartmeier-Prigg
City Councilor



Nadia Hasan
City Councilor



Marc San Soucie
City Councilor



Allison Tivnon
City Councilor