

Dear Chairs Jama and Fahey and members of the committee,

My name is Reagan LaChapelle and I am a tenant in Oregon. Like many in our state, COVID impacted my family greatly and these past couple of years have been a struggle. I am currently living in an apartment complex under a Section 8 housing voucher and my family's financial situation only worsened during the pandemic. My sons lost their father this year and both were diagnosed with rare medical conditions.

When the Oregon Emergency Rental Assistance Program opened, I applied for rental assistance hoping this was going to be the answer to our struggles. I can tell you when I first asked my caseworker at HomeForward if there were assistance options available because we were behind on rent, she offered nothing but judgment. So the stigma attached to even applying hit me hard and often made me think twice about even applying.

The application process was complicated and no matter who I called, I rarely found actual answers. Just a lot of people telling me to call someone else instead. Finally, rent relief arrived, but because of a clerical error I didn't fully understand, my landlord insisted they would not take it and would need a new one. Oddly enough, this didn't keep the landlord from keeping and apparently depositing the check. Soon after, they actually sold the complex and left incomprehensible records to the new owner so while the check should have covered a few months of rent, it seems to have only covered a small portion with the previous landlord even pocketing the rest of the money.

My story hopefully illustrates for you the difficulties in the OERAP system that renters across the state are facing. I've tried my best to do what I was supposed to do and take care of my family. Yet still, I spent months going back and forth, calling and asking for help and none was given. This is why families need more help, more rent assistance, and more time while the system works out its' kinks. Please know that this bill is not enough. There needs to be more done to protect renters and urgently. This is the bare minimum, and it's necessary to help renters, but I also urge you to consider the stories you're hearing today and resolve to do more.

Thank you for your consideration,

Reagan LaChapelle