



TO: Joint Interim Committee On The Second Special Session of 2021
FROM: Nancy Haque, Executive Director, Basic Rights Oregon
DATE: December 11, 2021
RE: Support for Emergency Rental Assistance Policy

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

My name is Nancy Haque, and I am the Executive Director for Basic Rights Oregon. Basic Rights Oregon is the state's leading advocacy organization for the LGBTQ2SIA+ community. Our community is vast and includes tens of thousands of Oregonians from every corner of this state.

Today, I'm advocating not only for the LGBTQ2SIA+ community but every Oregonian facing eviction for nonpayment while their rent assistance application is processed. On behalf of Basic Rights Oregon, I want to express our deep support for modifying SB 278 to better address the demand for rent assistance and better reflect the current capacity to deliver it.

No one should be evicted for nonpayment while their rent assistance application is processed. The government promised relief to thousands of households facing eviction during a global crisis. Roughly 8,000 low-income households who applied for that assistance have been waiting so long, their safe harbor period expired. With more than 24,000 applicants waiting to share that fate, we must act now to prevent the unnecessary harm that follows eviction and displacement.

Our housing crisis is hard to ignore. Oregon has a higher rate of people experiencing homelessness than nearly every other state in America. The U.S. Census reported that more than 67,000 Oregon households are experiencing housing instability due to paying rent.

Years of research and countless studies have repeatedly shown that discrimination threatens access to housing. Members of the LGBTQ2SIA+ community are more likely than their straight, cisgender peers to be poor, renters, have unstable housing, and be homeless. Furthermore, LGBTQ2SIA+ elders are more likely to live alone than non-LGBTQ2SIA+ elders, and discrimination against LGBT adults in housing and homeless shelters is widespread.

According to the Williams Institute, 8% of transgender adults across all sexual orientation identities, 3% of cisgender and genderqueer sexual minority adults, and 1% of cisgender straight adults reported indicators of recent homelessness. Among sexual minority adults, African American respondents had significantly higher rates of recent housing instability at 6%. That same study reported that 17% of sexual minority adults reported they experienced lifetime homelessness, which is more than twice what we have found in a general population study.

LGBTQ2SIA+ young people are 120% more likely to experience homelessness than non-LGBTQ2SIA+ youth. Family conflict is the most common cause of all youth homelessness. For LGBTQ2SIA+ youth, particularly, the conflict tends to be over their sexual orientation or gender identity. While rejection is the most frequently cited reason LGBTQ2SIA+ youth experience homelessness, it's not the only one. According to service providers, additional reasons include aging



out of the foster care system, poverty, and conflict in the home. Often, it's not one thing that causes homelessness, but a combination of many. It's estimated that about 7% of youth in the United States are LGBTQ2SIA+, while 40% of youth experiencing homelessness are LGBTQ2SIA+.

Housing insecurity is an issue for many Oregonians, especially those who identify as LGBTQ2SIA+. Updating SB 278 to meet the current needs of our state is a crucial part to helping solve our housing crisis.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this important issue.