

Special Session HOUSING SAFE HARBOR BILL (LC 9)

Jayne Downing, Executive Director

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

Thank you for the opportunity to offer support for the Housing Safe Harbor Bill. I am the Executive Director of the Center for Hope & Safety. The Center for Hope & Safety serves victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking and human trafficking in Marion and Polk Counties. Our program is just one of many nonprofits throughout Oregon providing vital services to some of Oregon's most vulnerable families.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, 37% of women in Oregon have been victims of domestic or sexual violence. Research shows domestic violence is one of the leading causes of homelessness for women and children. Over the last several years, our community Point in Time homeless count showed nearly 50% of the women surveyed cited domestic violence as one of the key reasons for their houselessness.

Even before the pandemic survivors of domestic and sexual violence were struggling with securing and maintaining housing. The struggle has only been exacerbated by the pandemic, wildfires, and ice storms. At the Center for Hope & Safety, our Housing Navigators having been working diligently with survivors to identify and secure safe, long-term housing. The emergency funds and provisions provided by the Housing Safe Harbor Bill will make it possible for more families to stabilize and remain in permanent housing.

The provisions in the Housing Safe Harbor Bill will provide 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. It will also 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 will be protected until their application has been considered, and either granted or denied, no matter when they apply.

Also needed is the extension of 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. Families need the expansion and extension of the current 60-day landlord guarantee fund to cover any period (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.

We encourage your support of this critical legislation to protect vulnerable families from eviction and homelessness.

Thank you for all your efforts to keep survivors, and all families in Oregon safe and secure.

Center for HOPE & SAFETY



Formerly Mid-Valley Women's Crisis Service

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because everyone deserves a life free of violence