



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

Ted Wheeler, Mayor
Carmen Rubio, Commissioner
Dan Ryan, Commissioner
Jo Ann Hardesty, Commissioner
Mingus Mapps, Commissioner

December 10, 2021

Senator Beyer, Co-Chair
Representative Fahey, Co-Chair
Joint Interim Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and Fahey and Members of the Committee,

Portland City Council calls on the Legislature to fulfill its commitment to supporting Oregonians experiencing housing instability throughout the global COVID-19 pandemic. Relief has been promised to thousands of Oregon households and we need to ensure that promise is kept. No one should be evicted while they wait for emergency rent assistance.

In the 2021 legislative session, SB 278 passed with broad bipartisan support so households could be secure while they waited for rent assistance. Due to overwhelming demand and a longer than anticipated application processing period, statutory changes are needed to achieve that goal.

We urge the Legislature to:

- Provide new funding for continued access to rent assistance for tenants with low incomes through the winter months until new federal resources are available and new funding for the landlord guarantee fund.
- Modify SB 278's safe harbor period to cover the entire application period and extend the sunset on renter protections. Tenants who have applied for assistance should be protected until their application has been considered, and either granted or denied, no matter when they apply.
- Extend 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 common-sense provision works to facilitate access to available resources designed to prevent displacement.
- Expand and extend the current 60-day landlord guarantee fund to cover any period of time (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. Removing risk for the landlord can ensure tenant stability and access to assistance.

Since the start of the safe harbor protections in SB 278, nearly 2,300 nonpayment evictions have been filed in Oregon courts. Oregon's Black, Indigenous, and communities of color have been

disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and have sought rent assistance at higher rates and are at greater risk of eviction. Evictions increase the risk of houselessness and cause generational harm to households.

Lower-income Oregonians are coming out of the pandemic further behind, with increased debt and jobs that still aren't paying enough to support a household. Emergency rent assistance resources have been critical to paying off rent and utility arrears so renters can move forward out of the pandemic. The Oregon Legislature should do all it can to ensure that low-income renters don't lose their homes while they get back on their feet.

Portland City Council urges swift action to prevent the harm that comes from eviction and displacement.

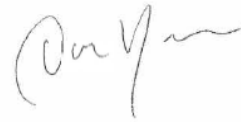
Sincerely,



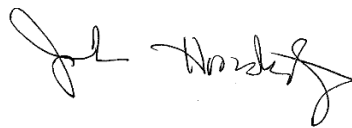
Ted Wheeler
Mayor



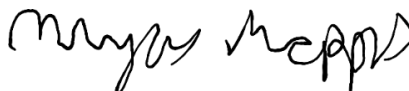
Carmen Rubio
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Mingus Mapps
Commissioner