

December 11, 2021

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

Thank you for holding this special session and for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Deborah Sposito and I am a local Portland landlord. I am providing testimony in support of LC9. I am personally investing in building 13 units of permanent affordable housing in NW Portland because pandemic or not, we still have severe inequity and inequality in who owns and has access to land and stable housing in Oregon. Having grown up with white privilege and economic security in Portland, I am extremely concerned about the disproportionate impact on BIPOC, survivors of domestic violence and low-income community members who need time to access rent assistance, start new jobs, find affordable childcare, catch up on bills, recover from covid and fires. The impact housing instability has on children and youth is catastrophic. We need to keep Oregon's children and youth in stable and safe housing.

If evictions begin, Oregon will see our internally displaced population increase to an unprecedented level, one that will be high risk, vulnerable to violence, mental health crises and addiction. It will be much harder to get resources to our community members once they are houseless. Evictions put a dangerous and disproportionate burden on community members that face institutionalized racism and discrimination in the search for services and housing. We are facing a potential humanitarian crisis while still in midst of a global pandemic.

No one should be evicted for nonpayment while their rent assistance application is in process. We must act now to prevent the unnecessary and tragic generational harm that comes from eviction and displacement.

- We need to provide new funding for continuing access to rent assistance for tenants with low-income until new federal resources are available, and for the landlord guarantee fund.
- 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 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 is a common-sense provision that 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. This removes risk for the landlord in ensuring tenant stability and access to assistance.

Oregon has severe class and racial inequity and a troubling urban – rural divide and has for decades. Much of Oregon was in a housing crisis for the five – ten years before the pandemic began. We need long term solutions. We need to put all the options on the table to solve the housing crisis.

Currently there are thousands of Oregon households at imminent risk of losing their homes because their applications haven't been processed in time. Nonpayment court evictions have already skyrocketed since the end of the eviction moratorium.

You have the power to stop these displacements. More than 50 groups representing tenants, seniors, working families, local governments, faith groups and housing providers are calling to stop

non-payment evictions until pending applications can be processed. No tenant who has applied for assistance should lose their home because they are waiting for help.

Oregon is not alone in facing overwhelming need for rent assistance, or in facing difficulties scaling up their rent assistance programs to address unprecedented need. Throughout the pandemic, lawmakers like yourselves have taken important steps to protect people from the long-lasting and significant negative consequences of eviction. If we do not take action now, all of our prior work will be lost, and thousands of Oregon households will suffer generational harm, specifically lifting up the impact this will have on Black, Indigenous and people of color. Please act now.

For the safety and stability of our friends, families, and neighbors across the state, I strongly urge you to take action.

Thank you all for the hard work you are doing in this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Deborah Sposito  
Portland, Oregon