



Becky Straus  
Managing Attorney, Eviction Defense Project  
Oregon Law Center  
bstraus@oregonlawcenter.org

---

**Testimony in Support of LC 9  
Joint Interim Committee on the Second Special Session of 2021  
December 11, 2021**

Co-Chairs Beyer and Fahey, and Members of the Joint Committee:

My name is Becky Straus and I am an eviction defense attorney with the Oregon Law Center. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

What we at OLC have witnessed through our eviction defense work is that since the moratorium ended in June, evictions for nonpayment of rent have restarted in earnest. Initially, the most common challenge was that tenants were unaware of the availability of rent assistance or that language or technology barriers were great obstacles to accessing it. But, shortly after, beginning in September, those problems compounded because the first of the 60-day safe harbors began to lapse, and thousands of Oregonians were still waiting on rent assistance processing. These tenants were doing everything the state was asking of them – applying for assistance, collecting necessary documents, submitting proof of application to their landlord – and yet they were facing imminent eviction because the check wasn't ready yet.

For the ensuing months and as recently as yesterday, clients have contacted our offices expressing desperation, frustration, confusion and sometimes outright disbelief that it is legally possible for them to be made homeless- simply because their application hasn't been processed yet.

I can share a couple of examples.

In one case, our client had fallen behind in rent during the pandemic and, working to support a family of four, was struggling to catch up and get back on her feet. She had applied for rent assistance more than 2 months before finding us and was facing a do-or-die court date the next morning. Her landlord *knew* that her rent assistance application was still pending and that payment would be processed soon, but was refusing to wait. Before I got involved, her landlord would only agree to hold off on the eviction if the tenant paid 2 months of rent within 3 days, an approach that made little sense to me given the 12 months' worth of rent assistance was working its way through processing and would be awarded to her landlord in a matter of weeks. The issue was time.

Another client, a single mother working hard on her low wage to cover housing and medical expenses for her disabled daughter, applied for rent assistance to help her through covid-imposed economic hardships. She applied for rent assistance in July but, when she called us 2 days before her trial in October, her rent assistance still had not come through. Her landlord was pressuring her to sign a moveout agreement. Succumbing to the loss of her home with nowhere to go would

have surely left her and her daughter homeless, heightening health risks for both of them and pushing them deeper into economic insecurity. Rent assistance that would preserve her housing was on the way, but, past her safe harbor deadline, her landlord wasn't willing to wait. She and her daughter were out of time.

Attorney involvement in these cases helped convince the landlords to wait, but thousands of tenants right now are not so lucky.

This Legislature has made clear and repeated policy choices throughout the pandemic that no one should lose their home as a result of the pandemic and through no fault of their own. Passage of LC 9 can recommit to Oregonians that no tenant will be evicted while their rent assistance application is pending. We urge your support.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective.

Thank you.