

12/121 Oregon Legislative Special Session Hearing Re: LC9- Rent Assistance and enhanced Safe Harbor Protections

Good afternoon Chair Faye and legislators

I'm Mariah Alyn-Claire, Tenant Advocate, with the Community Alliance of Tenants Leadership Council and a Multnomah County resident.

I support the LC9 proposal for bolstering the safe harbor policy plus additional relief funds for the winter.

However, providing *funding* without shoring up the state's delivery system will only continue the pattern of extended delays and eviction fallout.

I'm asking state leaders to *bridge the gap to access* with an enhanced outreach, intake, and referral program:

targeting tenants who were Unable to access and navigate the state's complicated computer program.

- Immigrants, people with language barriers,
- Tenants without tech equipment: computers, fax machines, and copiers
- Tenants lacking computer skills such as many *seniors*,
- Disabled populations, for example, TBI survivors who lack the capacity for sitting in front of computer screens for hours trying to figure out the state's complicated and faulty system.

I spoke with many tenants who tried repeatedly to navigate the application system, finally gave up, and eventually lost their housing.

- Others who were unfamiliar with the OHCS partner organizations had never before applied for assistance said they felt ***overwhelmed, and didn't know where to go, or what to do.***

1. I propose the following outreach, intake, and referral program enhancements and other compensatory support measures:

- Weekly **PSA's** with special **rental assistance messaging using State contact numbers** (not the ineffective 211 system where it takes 2-3 weeks to *maybe* receive a call back)
- Using State ERAP caller ID
- A robust **intake & referral system** with actual **people answering the phones**, returning calls, gathering information using state ERAP caller ID so that recipients can distinguish ERAP from the deluge of Robo scam calls.

- **Establishing a *priority list* of folks who didn't make the first relief round (immigrants, families with children, seniors, disabled, low-income renters populations, BIPOC)**
 - **Timely Referrals to partner agencies & case management leading people through the entire rental assistance application process** using low barrier attestation,
Not leaving families waiting in limbo for months with no response.
2. **Providing compensation to evicted non-payment tenants who fell through the cracks**, to cover the cost of moving deposits, items lost in eviction, etc.
 3. **Given that the pandemic continues with no end in sight, I ask for a moratorium on evictions**, including no-cause evictions, for all Oregon tenants until June of 2023 or until the pandemic ends.

Pandemic rent increases limited to 3% plus CPI to support vulnerable tenant populations struggling with economic uncertainty due to growing inflationary costs for household goods and services.

We can't keep doing the same things, the same old ways, expecting different results.

We need a comprehensive Emergency Response Program for Oregonians Vs. piecemeal, band-aid policies.

LC9 is an important single step, but tenants need much more over the long haul to ensure our public safety for the duration of this life-threatening pandemic crisis.

We need a comprehensive Emergency Response Program for Oregonians Vs. piecemeal, band-aid policies.

Thank you for hearing my testimony.

Marih Alyn-Claire

Community Alliance of Tenants Member

503-995-0250