

Dear Co-chairs Beyer and Fahey, and all committee members:

My name is Kon Damas and I live in Talent. I am a mediator with more than 30 years experience handling a variety of cases, including evictions. I respectfully request that you support an investment in Eviction Prevention Mediation programs in Oregon.

Eviction Prevention Mediation has been effective in Oregon for decades.

I'd like to share a story about a recent eviction mediation that highlights the life-changing potential of mediation.

A newly single parent of two children was facing eviction for failing to pay the space rent on their manufactured home. The housing provider's agent wished to decline mediation and proceed to the eviction trial but the judge encouraged the parties to "at least try". At mediation, the renter explained that the other parent had recently left the marriage, a child became ill, and renter lost their job due to inability to find child care. The renter acknowledged the rent that was due. Upon hearing these details, the agent softened and shared that they had been raised by a single parent and had no desire to put children on the street.

The mediation took less than an hour, full payment over time was agreed to, and all left relieved and satisfied. This mediation avoided catastrophe for the family and financial loss for the housing provider. This outcome could not happen in a trial as a judge is limited to deciding possession only and would have had to enter an order requiring the renter, and the two children, to leave their home in four days.

The earlier we can bring those at-risk of eviction to a conversation with their housing provider, the more likely that the housing provider will get financial stability, and the more likely a renter can achieve housing stability. A lack of investment in an eviction avoidance mediation program could further harm our strained housing sector for years to come.

Thank you for working on this aspect of Oregon's housing stability crisis.

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