

Co-Chairs Fahey & Beyer and members of the Joint Interim Committee.

I am Patrick Sponsler, the Administrator for the Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution at the University of Oregon. We help manage a statewide system of community-based mediation programs where more than 1,100 trained volunteer mediators help to provide service in all 36 counties.

In the wake of the 2008 housing crash, our Office helped oversee the successful use of mediation to address our state's foreclosure crisis where we have served more than 11,000 families in the foreclosure avoidance program.

I request the Legislature to direct an immediate \$2.5 million sub allocation for eviction prevention mediation from the \$100M allocated to OHCS to fund eviction prevention and diversion programs.

In addition to what I'll share, I'd like to focus attention on some submitted written testimony. Tia Politi, the president of the Oregon Housing Rental Association, submitted testimony in support of funding Eviction prevention mediation. Erion Moore from Resolutions Northwest who runs the City of Portland's landlord Tenant mediation program writes about how culturally relevant practices are brought into mediations to make better agreements, unlike what can be done in court. And finally, a Call-to-Action for eviction prevention mediation signed by county commissioners, cities, and community action agencies.

THANK YOU for calling a special session and for the large investments you continue to make in rental assistance and other eviction prevention efforts.

**However, the Eviction Prevention Investment package in front of you today is incomplete, as it does not align with national best practices for eviction prevention programs. Mediation must be added.**

Mediation is a proven upstream strategy to prevent eviction filings. I am aware that there are some who do not believe that voluntary mediation is the right strategy, or that it is not the right process for everyone. But, the national and regional data are not in agreement with that perspective.

As one example, just this week, Philadelphia announced plans to make its eviction prevention mediation program permanent after a successful pilot reduced eviction filings by over 75%, with over 93% of mediations successfully finding solutions. The program is cited as a key reason Philadelphia has been able to distribute more than \$235 Million in rental assistance in an efficient manner.

Philadelphia NAACP President Catherine Hicks said --

"Landlords and tenants benefit from [the eviction prevention program], as do many of the City's most vulnerable neighborhoods." An "Eviction's impact extends well beyond housing: children may be pulled from classes as their parents move, families may face greater food insecurity, and the health of the community is put at risk."



The legislature has invested in our community mediation centers for over 30 years; they work and can be an effective partner in creating permanent change in the way we address housing instability.

Thank you for your service to our state.

Patrick Sponsler

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Patrick M. Sponsler, MPA  
Administrator