

Written testimony for special session December 14, 2021

Co-Chairs Beyer and Fahey, and all committee members:

Greetings ladies and gentleman.

My name is Barry Bruster, I live in Toledo Oregon, Lincoln County.

For 15 years I was a patrol Deputy with the Lincoln County Sheriff's Office. In that capacity I have been commanded by various judges to remove tenants from their homes by force. In that process, the Deputy will knock on the door. If a tenant answers they are advised they are being evicted and trespassed from the residence. Typically they have an opportunity to grab essentials and vacate the property. If there is no answer a landlord will open the door, the deputy will draw their firearm, search the residence at gunpoint, and detain and trespass anyone found in the residence. The property is then released to the owner. My experience is that the residence is usually left in a deplorable condition much to the dismay of the property owner. Forced evictions create trauma to all involved parties.

I am also a landlord/property owner providing homes to 13 families. This is my business and the income feeds and clothes my wife, children and provides them with a home. Landlords are having to wait months for rent when a tenant has sought State offered rental assistance. Landlords have adapted to this by requiring new tenants to pay first and last months rent plus a deposit. This counts to about three months rent, which is impossible for a renter living paycheck to paycheck. I recently had an apartment for rent. Within two days I had 20 calls begging me to rent the apartment to them. These were not inquires, These were people saying "please rent to me, I have nowhere else to go." Families willing to cram into a tiny one bedroom apartment, "we will make it work."

I am currently a mediator with Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution. I mediate mandatory evictions for the Lincoln County Circuit Court. During the initial appearance mediation tenants and landlords will reach a stipulated agreement 75% of the time. As a neutral party I am able to assist each party with options for rental assistance, negotiate a longer time for move out or possibly remain in the residence. Mediation avoids additional court time, eviction records, judgments, and expenses.

In the rental industry time is money. By providing tenants and landlords an opportunity for pre-eviction mediation before an eviction notice is posted or court case filed saves time. Supporting eviction prevention mediation provides security to tenants, saves landlords money and the courts valuable time and resources.

Thank you for your time.

Barry Bruster

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Lincoln Community Dispute Resolution

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