

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

Re: Support for SB 282-1, Tenant COVID Protections

For the record, my name is Sara Rudolph and I am an advocate here to testify in support of tenant stability. Thank you for taking up SB 282-1. I strongly support this bill, which is essential for the health and well being of the people we serve.

The bill will stabilize renter households, and ensure that there is time for state and federal rent assistance to reach landlords and resolve back rent debt.

An estimated 11-16% of renters have fallen behind on rent. With dim prospects for recovering lost income, renting Oregonians need more time to stabilize their families. As nearly a half a billion dollars of state and federal tenant and landlord assistance are being distributed, we must ensure that people have time to access assistance, and aren't unfairly evicted after the moratorium ends. A temporary setback during COVID shouldn't make it impossible to rent in the future.

Our Black and Brown neighbors are at the greatest risk of lifelong harm from the COVID evictions. Discriminatory housing policies have made homeownership difficult and inaccessible, leaving people of color at higher risk of rental evictions even as higher rates of COVID exposure are leaving people ill and economically stressed.

For example, according to the U.S. Census Pulse Survey, 30% of Black renters are at risk of eviction because of concerns they can't pay next month's rent.

The Pulse survey shows that Oregonians are going to great lengths to pay their rent - even during the moratorium - using savings, making sacrifices, borrowing money. But people need time to get caught up on back rent.

An eviction or a late payment can make it almost impossible for Renters to access housing - if we don't act, the COVID pandemic will impact families for years to come. In a time like this when we have all faced an enemy larger than ourselves - this pandemic - we must come together and help each other through so that the impacts don't last a lifetime.

The eviction moratorium was essential in helping renters stay safe and stable in their homes, but we need more time to help people pay thousands of dollars in back rent or to apply for rental assistance. At current rates, the state won't be fully vaccinated by rent due date of June 30th and our economy will likely remain in partial shutdown. If renters can't go back to work, they can't pay their back rent.

As we move into the next stage of the COVID pandemic, we must acknowledge the ongoing difficulty that continues to face our most vulnerable communities. We must act to ensure that the fallout from the COVID pandemic does not sentence Oregonians who rent their homes to lasting collateral consequences. We urge you to pass SB 282-1.

Thank you for your work.

Sara Rudolph
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