



4 March 2021

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 282. My name is Jimmy Jones and I am the Executive Director of MWVCAA, where we serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and 11 other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$50 million in services and direct client assistance to people in poverty.

We strongly support Senate Bill 282, which would:

- Extend the grace period to repay back rent to February 28, 2022. This critical provision will give renters the extra time they need to access rental assistance funds or get back to work. There is nearly half-a-billion dollars headed to Oregon for rental assistance over 2021, but like every other large scale resource deployment it will take time to implement, time to overcome bottlenecks and barriers in the system, and time to fully deploy. This extension buys low-income and COVID impacted households across the state the time they need to make their rental agreements whole.
- Without further action, Oregon is headed for a tsunami of evictions in July of 2021, just as the rental assistance deployment should approach 50 percent spenddown. Those evictions will make renting much more difficult for our low-income community in the future. It would be a cruel tragedy for the poor, who went to work so the rest of us could buy groceries and gas, who risked the dangers of COVID, only to end up with an eviction and profound barriers to future housing.
- This measure would also limit the impact of the evictions we cannot avoid, by prohibiting landlords from using COVID-era evictions against future rental applicants, and sealing those evictions from reporting services. It would bar credit history reports on late payments during the moratorium, extend the grace period, and prohibit screening out of tenants based on COVID-era non-payment of rent.

The economic tragedy of the COVID-era will cast a long shadow over our working poor for years to come. Large numbers of working mothers have been driven from the workforce because of lack of childcare. Those who have suffered the most from the economic and especially employment constriction are largely service industry and blue collar workers whose economic futures remain in considerable doubt. In order to prevent a greater tragedy, we must make certain that people have enough time to pay back rent, and access the resources that are available. Otherwise, we run the risk of undermining our own plans for rental assistance, as one hand of the state undoes what the other hand has labored so hard to make happen.

Respectfully,



Jimmy Jones
Executive Director