



A STRONG VOICE FOR OREGON'S WORKERS

TO: Chair Jama
Vice-Chair Linthicum
Members of the Senate Committee On Housing and Development

FR: Jacob Finkelman, OR AFL-CIO

RE: SB 282-1 Support

March 5, 2021

The Oregon AFL-CIO represents 300,000 workers across Oregon and is a voice for all workers in the legislative process. Safe and stable housing is inextricably linked to the safety and prosperity of workers and their families. SB 282-1 is essential for the health and well being of all workers. It stabilizes renter households, and ensures 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 during the course of the pandemic. 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.

Simply put, 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 as these same populations are disproportionately impacted by the health effects of COVID-19. 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. We need to ensure Oregon's recovery doesn't leave anyone out. Working mothers, BIPOC Oregonians and lower income blue-collar workers have borne the economic brunt of the pandemic both because they are most likely to have lost income, are more likely to rent their homes or are more likely to have contracted COVID. Workers of color are more likely to work in high-risk industries and experience the most devastating effects of the pandemic.

Further, families need stability to provide for their children's education. Oregon already has one of the highest rates of student homelessness in the country. We cannot force families whose children have been learning remotely to lose stability, internet connection and the ability to keep their education going in the pandemic. When working families become housing-insecure, it is a devastating blow to their industries, their communities, and their families that will likely be felt for generations to come.

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. Some of the national "renters protection" programs and services we have seen over the past year are effectively bailing out mega-landlords and banks. Without true, rent assistance and moratorium programs, workers and their families will

be impacted for decades to come. 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 the 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 with the -1 amendment.