



Smart policies for today's families.

April 27, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB 282A

House Committee on Housing

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 282A. Family Forward Oregon is committed to advancing policies that support families and help them succeed, both in the workplace and at home. We work to ensure that Oregon is a place where all families can be economically secure and have the time they need to take care of each other. We believe having a safe and stable home is a critical component to every family's success – it impacts a family's safety and security, their childrens' educational outcomes, and contributes to economic stability for the entire family. Stable housing is even more critical during a global pandemic where the safest place for people to be is at home.

Our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) neighbors are at the greatest risk of lifelong harm from the COVID evictions—it is no different when it comes to the impacts of the pandemic on their housing security. A recent study showed that while tenants continued to pay rent from April into summer, as many as 35% of those surveyed owe back rent. That number increases to 56% for people of color.¹

The pandemic is also having disproportionate economic impacts on women. Approximately 865,000 women ages 20 and over, including 324,000 Latinas and 58,000 Black women, dropped out of the workforce in August and September alone². By February of this year, women were still short nearly 5.1 million jobs compared to February 2020.³ If they lose their homes through eviction, not only will they have a permanent record, but families with children who are hanging on by a thread dealing with long term unemployment will have that thread cut.

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.

¹<https://www.pdx.edu/homelessness/sites/g/files/znlchr1791/files/2020-09/Renters%20in%20Covid-Oregon%20summer%202020.pdf>

² <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/september-jobs-fs1.pdf>

³ <https://nwlc.org/resources/feb-jobs-2021/>

Furthermore, after wildfires many renters have had to double up - to care for kids who are now remote-learning, to care for elderly family members, or simply to share expenses because they cannot continue to pay rent. During this ongoing crisis, it's only fair to provide that landlords shouldn't kick people out who need to share housing during an emergency. This provision is temporary, and only lasts through February - a reasonable provision while we get through this crisis.

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 282A.

Sincerely,

Courtney Helstein
Political Director, Family Forward Oregon