



To: Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan and members of the Housing Committee
From: Kim McCarty
Date: April 27, 2021

Re: Support for SB 282, Tenant COVID Protections

For the record, my name is Kim McCarty and I am the Executive Director of the Community Alliance of Tenants. (CAT). CAT is Oregon's only statewide, grassroots, tenant-controlled, tenant-rights organization. I am here to testify in support of SB 282 because this bill supports our conviction that no Oregon renter, regardless of immigration status, should be evicted or burdened with years of debt for rent that they were unable to pay during the pandemic, through no fault of their own.

SB 282 includes critical short-term tenant protections, such as time to pay back rent from the COVID emergency period, allowing doubling up, increased damages for retaliation violations, and prohibition of using eviction or negative credit records. These are needed protections because we know it will take time to distribute the rent assistance, we know that households are doubling up due to loss of homes in the wildfires or loss of income due to COVID, and we have evidence of increased harassment and retaliation toward Black, Indigenous, Latinx and other Households of Color.

While CAT strongly supports SB282, we must remind you that SB282 does not address the problem of low-income tenants not having the resources to pay future rent, when the current eviction moratorium ends this June and we must also remind you that the financial hardship declaration form does not help landlords but it is hurting tenants. We anticipate as many as 90,000 households will not have the resources to pay July rent. We know that our State agencies, by their own estimates, are not equipped to distribute all of the federal funds by July. In contrast, Oregon is estimated to be able to significantly help tenants pay back-rent for landlords but that will not happen by July. So what is lacking, is time to distribute the funds. Do not forget that most tenants are paying rent. Those who are not able to pay rent are most in need. And those most in need, often take the longest to reach.

So, we urge you to adopt SB282 and then solve how to help the significant number of households that will not be back to work in July and not able to pay rent. Find a solution for how to give tenants and landlords time to access the rent relief that can be spent as late as September 2022. CAT suggests one solution is an extension of the Eviction Moratorium until full expenditure of federal relief funds.

For our most vulnerable communities we must explore every tool available to us to protect and stabilize communities. Because we can foresee the negative outcomes of this crisis, we can also act to prevent it.

Sincerely,

Kim

Kim McCarty
Executive Director
Community Alliance of Tenants