



VOICES UNITED.
OPPORTUNITY REIMAGINED.

June 14, 2021

House Committee on Rules
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support SB 278

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

Our Children Oregon's (OCO) mission is to be a voice and force for the common good for all Oregon children, ensuring all children have the resources and opportunities they need to reach their full potential. We elevate data and lived experience to prioritize children and center communities. We work with over 110 partners to develop the Children's Agenda, a legislative agenda championing equitable state legislative policies and shared investments to improving the lives of Oregon's children and their families.

Protecting Kids and Families from Evictions and Instability is part of the 2021 Children's Agenda, and SB 278 will provide safeguards for those renters who have applied for rental assistance to prevent evictions.

You and the other members of the Oregon Legislature have done so much to address the needs of Oregonians as they have been impacted by the pandemic and wildfires – thank you!

We need to allow the rental assistance systems the time to ensure that the federal rent assistance dollars can flow to landlords. It is unlikely that can happen in time for those renters applying for help with July rent. We are not alone in this. Across the country as new relief has come in, systems and programs are rushing to get money out the door but the eviction moratorium deadline is simply coming too fast. When the moratorium ends on June 30th, there will be no protections for people who cannot pay rent after July 1.

The most recent numbers show 16,500 people have submitted applications for rent assistance. 10,000 are complete and pending approval. 6,500 have outstanding issues that need to be finalized. As of June 7th, according to the OHCS dashboard, 70% requested assistance with July rent. 62% of applicants earn less than 50% of their area median

The Children's Agenda

is a broad slate of equitable investments and policy solutions to meet the holistic needs of Oregon children, youth, and their families.



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income, meaning that they have few resources at hand to make up rent on their own. The overwhelming demand shows us that there is overwhelming risk for displacement through unfair evictions if Oregon doesn't take swift action.

SB 278 with amendments will provide some safeguards for those renters who have applied for rent assistance from eviction, while their applications are pending:

- If a tenant has applied for rent assistance, an eviction would be prevented for 60 days while that application is pending. The sixty-day clock will start with the tenant notifies their landlord of their application. A tenant may only do this once.
- Rent assistance providers will need to provide something to the tenant that indicates they've applied for assistance.
- Termination notices and eviction paperwork will include information about where to apply for rent assistance and how to let their landlord know they have applied.
- Tenants can let their landlord know they've applied for assistance any time at or before first appearance in Court.
- If after 60 days a landlord has not received assistance, they can move forward with an eviction filing.
- These provisions will sunset February 28, 2022.

As nearly a half a billion dollars of state and federal tenant and landlord assistance is starting to be distributed, we must ensure that people have time to access assistance. SB 278 will allow time to help ensure that rent assistance payments reach the landlord. The bill ensures stability for tenants while getting resources into the hands of landlords.

Oregon children and families need stability. Oregon already has one of the highest rates of student homelessness in the country. We need to avoid evictions beginning this summer so that children can be in stable housing and prepared to start school in the fall. The Oregon Legislature has taken significant and much appreciated steps during the pandemic and the wildfires to prevent evictions and keep people in their homes. It would be tragic if in these final weeks, people faced an unfair eviction because money didn't get allocated on time. We cannot allow all the good work we've done to keep people in their homes to fall apart now, right as assistance is coming available.

Please quickly pass SB 278.

From the Our Children Oregon Team,

Chis Coughlin, Policy, Advocacy, and Community Engagement Director

Jenifer Wagley, Executive Director

View the 2021 Children's Agenda at www.ourchildrenoregon.org/2021-childrens-agenda