

TO: Senate Committee on Housing and Development
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate
RE: Support for SB 799 to reduce evictions and prevent homelessness
DATE: January 30, 2023



Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty.

Food security and stable housing go hand-in-hand.

At Oregon Food Bank, we know that the best solutions come from those of us who have experienced hunger and poverty first-hand. And over the course of many years working in communities that disproportionately face food insecurity, we have heard loud and clear that the lack of affordable housing in Oregon is a primary reason why more than one in eight kids in Oregon lives in a household that struggles to afford food.

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. The well-being of our communities depends on whether this basic need is met. [According to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, more than 50% of Oregon renters do not have enough money left over](#) after rent to pay for food, medicine, and other basic necessities. A recent report from Oregon State University found that Oregonians who are [renters are six times more likely to experience hunger than Oregonians who are homeowners](#). Too many Oregonians are forced to choose between feeding their families or losing everything to eviction. It's time to do better.

We need to keep families in their homes and avoid preventable homelessness.

If we do not take steps to prevent evictions and displacement, **more and more people will become homeless as we try to re-house people who are currently living outside**. Evictions for non-payment are skyrocketing. Since the expiration of protections, there have been **more than 2,000 eviction filings every month— spiking 43% above pre-pandemic levels**.

Surveys in several communities say that between 12-37% of people who have been evicted became homeless at some point, or say eviction was a cause of homelessness. Even at the most conservative estimate— if 12% of the 2,000 eviction cases this month alone experienced homelessness, that increases our current crisis by 240 households statewide in one month. If we don't take action now to avoid preventable homelessness, the housing crisis will get worse.

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SB 799 would restore protections that have proven to work.

We must make evictions rare, and when they do happen, more fair. During the pandemic, the legislature did exactly that. **Thanks to the pandemic protections, there were fewer evictions and fewer people displaced from their homes.** We have learned what works and what doesn't work to prevent displacement, ensure fairness, and reduce harm implemented by the eviction process. It's time to take those lessons learned from the pandemic experience and apply them today with SB 799.

SB 799 is a fair approach that gives people who are behind on their rent a reasonable amount of time to catch up, and if they need it, locate, apply and receive rent assistance. The bill would address the fact that evictions in Oregon are rushed and don't give people a chance to protect their homes.

SB 799 would:

- Reinstates the increased time between nonpayment notice and eviction court from 72 hours to 10 days to give people time to access assistance.
- Reinstates the "right to redemption," also known as "pay to stay," so that landlords cannot refuse payment at any point before a final court judgment.
- Reinstates a safe harbor period of up to 60 days for people who have notified the landlord they have applied for rent assistance, so no one is evicted when help is on the way.
- Reinstates the requirement to provide access to eviction information in the six most common languages spoken in Oregon.
- Reinstates information about how to access legal assistance.
- Reinstates ability for tenants to have guests and share housing costs as long as building rules and codes are followed.
- Streamlines the eviction sealing process for those who currently qualify, so eligible tenants can more easily remove barriers to future housing.

Moving forward we have an obligation to our communities to ensure that displacement is a last resort, rather than a first resort of the eviction process.

We strongly urge you to vote 'Yes' on SB 799. Thank you very much.

