



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

January 29, 2023

Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: **Support for SB 799**

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

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, in strong support of SB 799.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County. Since the early 2010s, service providers across the continuum of care have seen a visible increase in older adults experiencing homelessness. This cohort of older adults has increasingly experienced housing instability or become unhoused for the first time at age 50 or older, and they are more likely to have a disabling physical or mental health condition that adversely impacts their ability to participate in the workforce.<sup>1</sup>

As service providers, the NWPP team is constantly responding to a rapidly growing number of low-income older adults who are just one paycheck, one health crisis, or one emergency away from homelessness. **Because of COVID-19, this risk for seniors has only heightened: as researchers at Harvard University reported, the share of cost burdened renters who are seniors rose by 5 percentage points, the most rapid increase across age categories in the first year of the pandemic.** Among all households, cost burdens rose the fastest among Black renter households, worsening already-drastic racial disparities in housing affordability and stability.<sup>2</sup>

**We urge you to support SB 799 because the the critical, strengthened eviction protections for tenants that the Legislature passed during the pandemic were essential to the housing stability**

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<sup>1</sup> The Emerging Crisis of Aged Homelessness (2019), Dennis Culhane, PhD et al.  
<https://www.aisp.upenn.edu/wp-1content/uploads/2019/01/Emerging-Crisis-of-Aged-Homelessness-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Affordability Gaps Widened for Renters in the First Year of the Pandemic (2022), Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University.  
<https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/affordability-gaps-widened-renters-first-year-pandemic>

**of seniors we work with**, many of whom would have otherwise lost their housing. Some of their stories are below (*client names below changed for privacy*):

- **Christine** was stably housed for several years, having moved successfully to an affordable building after experiencing a period of homelessness. But when the pandemic hit, things began to fall apart: She lost her steady job and for nearly a year, could hardly find enough temp work to cover rent. Her fears increased when she realized that her management company was quick to issue eviction notices for unpaid rent to other residents. Just when she managed to find consistent employment, Christine was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer that required immediate treatment and prevented her from returning to work. Fortunately, **the extended 10-day period on the nonpayment eviction notice she received allowed her enough time to connect with the team at NWPP, who responded to her request, verified her eligibility for assistance, and issued rent payment to the landlord before a formal eviction could be filed against her.** Months later, she is still undergoing treatment but recovering safely in her home, with the ongoing help of NWPP's housing team.
- **William** managed to keep working through several years of the pandemic, relying daily on public transportation to get to his job. Unfortunately, service reductions to his bus line— due to a shortage of bus drivers in the transit system— affected his ability to arrive on time and eventually, he lost his job. While struggling to find work again, he began experiencing eyesight issues related to his diabetes diagnosis, and he eventually learned that his worsening vision loss was permanent. When William finally came to NWPP with an eviction notice, **the 10-day notice period gave the team ample time to prevent him from losing his home, with funding and one-on-one assistance to develop a long-term permanent housing plan.** Now, he is stably housed, thanks to receiving a local long-term rent assistance voucher and successfully applying for social security income.

With nonpayment eviction rates up approximately 43 percent from pre-pandemic numbers,<sup>3</sup> **it's clear that we must act now to reinstate the statewide protections that proved so essential to keeping William, Christine, and so many others housed during the pandemic**, and ensure that Oregon's eviction process will no longer be a fast-track towards displacement and homelessness.

SB 799 is a fair, common-sense approach to preventing the devastating — **and preventable** — impacts of nonpayment evictions, especially for the most vulnerable Oregonians who simply cannot conceive of losing the safety and protection of a home.

We thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Laura Golino de Lovato  
Executive Director  
Northwest Pilot Project

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<sup>3</sup> Evicted in Oregon (December 2022), Lisa K. Bates, PhD, et al. <https://www.evictedinoregon.com/numbers-at-a-glance>