

Submitter: Kim McCarty

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB799

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee,
Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Kim McCarty. I am the Executive Director of the Community Alliance of Tenants. For over 25 years the Community Alliance of Tenants has advocated for stronger tenant rights in Oregon. We believe that housing is the basis of a strong community. So we bring tenants together to organize and collectively advocate for fair and equal protections in housing practices and policies. And we educate tenants about their rights through our hotline and educational workshops.

I am here to testify in favor of SB 799 because evictions must be rare and they must be fair.

Passage of this common-sense bill, as well as the rest of the Homelessness Prevention Package to increase rent assistance, limit rate increases, and increase the data available about Oregon's rental market are needed together to give us the needed comprehensive strategy to prevent homelessness.

Daily, our hotline staff hear from tenants looking for financial assistance to prevent their eviction. When we get a call from a tenant seeking help with the rent we make referrals to agencies that may have rental assistance and hope that the money has not run out for the month. Because of scarce resources, many agencies will not help a tenant until they have an eviction notice. This starts a three-day sprint to find help, get a check cut and get the money delivered. Think of how long it takes most businesses to pay an invoice and you can see the timeframe is unreasonable. When there was a ten-day notice period, we had more time to help tenants find assistance and eviction rates were lower.

Even when tenants applied for rent assistance we heard from tenants about landlords that refused to accept the rent, refused to help tenants complete rent assistance applications, or accepted rent and still evicted their tenants for small outstanding balances. Imagine how defeating it is to come to court with the necessary funds to pay your landlord and find out that the landlord can refuse your payment and you will still be evicted. SB 799 will stop this practice and help prevent the needless cascade of negative outcomes for the tenant that can manifest for years after the eviction.

Too frequently we hear from Black, Indigenous, immigrant and refugee households about being denied access to housing and being evicted from the housing. For example, on average, landlords filed evictions against Black women renters at double

the rate of, or higher than white women renters in Oregon and in 16 other states, according to the ACLU's Women's Rights Project and Data Analytics team. This is evidence that disparate treatment on the basis of race or national origin is one of the causes of evictions. SB 799 will help us slow down the rate of evictions so that we can also slow down these race-based disparities in evictions.

Thank you again for hearing this important bill and allowing us to speak. I hope you will listen to the tenants that will be sharing their experiences and vote yes on SB 799 and the Homelessness Prevention Package.