



January 30, 2023

Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Senators Knopp, Patterson, and Sollman:

I write to you on behalf of Home Forward in strong support of Senate Bill 799 which proposes reforms to the eviction process and would improve housing stability for renters in Oregon.

Home Forward is a Public Housing Authority (PHA) and the largest provider of affordable housing in the state of Oregon. We serve more than 15,500 Multnomah County households earning low incomes by providing affordable housing, administering rent assistance, and providing supportive services. Our mission is to assure that the people of the community are sheltered. We own and manage over 6,000 homes throughout Multnomah County. We also provide households with services which range from housing stability to health and wellness to youth supports. Meanwhile, we fund rent assistance for thousands of households residing in private unregulated housing that we do not directly oversee. And we work on a lot of emergency rent assistance programs that benefit landlords and tenants alike, including Short Term Rent Assistance, the Landlord Compensation Fund, and the Landlord Guarantee Fund.

We know that housing stability is an essential ingredient in our housing and homelessness response. Evictions remove people from their homes. They exacerbate poverty by making it more difficult for families to find new homes. And we know there are disparities in evictions that impact Black and brown households, women, transgender individuals, people with disabilities, and youth at higher rates than the general population. But if we want to avoid further marginalizing already marginalized communities, we have the ability to reform that system.

At Home Forward, we prioritize housing stability and have begun to reform how we perform lease enforcement, implementing significant change on behalf of families we serve. Here are some examples:

- We provide 30 days notice for nonpayment of rent to ensure households have time to catch up. This approach is aligned with a new Biden-Harris proposed rule that would require 30 days notice in certain federally subsidized housing;
- We give residents the opportunity to enter into a repayment plan at any point in the lease enforcement process in order to avoid an eviction;
- We offer a right of redemption, allowing payment at any point in the process;
- And we do not seek a judgment in court, but discontinue a case with a repayment agreement, which reduces risk to households so they are not in danger of further instability at the end of a timeline;

- And throughout this process, we ensure households have access to emergency rent assistance resources.
- Meanwhile, within our rent assistance programs, we see the barriers that evictions can have on households attempting to find new housing in the private market:
 - We fund an expungement and eviction set aside clinic with Metropolitan Public Defenders;
 - We fund housing search advocates to help with leasing;
 - We provide money to pay down bad debt, including rental debt.

Home Forward has taken a lot of steps that track many of the protections embedded in SB 799 including the extended notice period and the right of redemption. And in some ways, like notice provisions, we have gone further than the proposed requirements of SB 799. But we know gaps still exist, and we need more comprehensive and consistent approaches in our housing market.

For all these reasons, we see this legislation as necessary to provide housing stability to tenants throughout the state. We urge you to pass SB 799. Thank you for the opportunity to offer support. Please contact Ian Davie, Chief Operating Officer, at ian.davie@homeforward.org or Christina Dirks, Director of Policy and Planning, christina.dirks@homeforward.org regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

Ian Davie
Chief Operating Officer
Home Forward