

Thank you, Senator Jamma, and other cabinet members.

I am writing to you to request that you please reinstate the Safe Harbor and make provisions for having guests' protection included in this very important bill.

As you are aware, there are thousands of Oregonians that have already been evicted, and more who are facing eviction every day. Many of those households did not have the protection of the Safe Harbor, their evictions were fast tracked using 72-hour notices, and they missed the opportunity to locate the scarce resources in the community that could have prevented them from losing their housing, and potentially falling into homelessness. Safe Harbor is how thousands of households made it through the worst of the pandemic and avoided eviction. Safe Harbor allowed a pause that was needed to locate and identify rent assistance and then figure out how to navigate a convoluted system. This need is still relevant because of the sheer numbers of households still in need and competing for the limited resources available. Many of these households have never accessed services before, and don't know where to start. They need time to not only connect to resources, and protections against eviction. The community-based organizations also need this time to process payments before court. Safe Harbor helps slow the process of eviction down, making it fairer, and placing the tenant in a position of likely resolving the problem, and remain in their homes.

Implementing a "guest" provision will help address what we already know happens when family members and friends are near losing their housing. This problem has increased and needs to be protected to prevent multiple families from potentially losing their housing. It is extremely difficult for many to close their doors to precious ones on the verge of homelessness. Many cannot and will not allow their friends and family to fall into such a fate of having to sleep in their cars, or on the streets. Helping or "guesting" is a means prevention. It's a sign of attempts to course-correct which inevitably saves everyone in costs to rehouse. Many of these guests remain temporarily, they decrease the need for shelter beds, and they reduce the number of homelessness living on the street. Allowing a provision that takes occupancy rates into consideration, and places a reasonable time limit for guests stays offers both the family an opportunity to do the right thing by their loved ones, and allows the guest the opportunity to move forward toward accessing rehousing services.

Please take this information and request into consideration when you are making decisions about the outcome of an individual's housing. The pandemic itself may be over, but the aftermath it created, combined with pre-pandemic conditions needs time, and creative problem-solving strategies. These two would have a positive long-term impact on preventing homelessness.

Thank You,  
~Linda King  
Director of Housing Stability  
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