

April 17, 2025

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, Co-Vice-Chairs, and Members of the Committee:

I was in the budget hearing last night and didn't get called on to give my testimony. I heard so many compelling and urgent needs for funding - I was energized to hear so many people speak passionately about what they do and how they make Oregon a better place. It made me really grateful for the people and important work being done in our state even though I didn't get called to share my own testimony. Here's mine to add.

My name is Jensi Albright, I work at the Community Alliance of Tenants and I am advocating in support of POPS 504 and 505, to ensure continuity of funding for emergency rent assistance and homelessness prevention resources in communities across the state.

Cuts to any of these programs will lead to more unsheltered homelessness in our communities, and more trauma for Oregonians who are struggling. Continuing these programs will save lives and support communities.

Rising rents are driving evictions which are really affecting our most vulnerable neighbors most: families with children, domestic violence survivors, and seniors. At the same time, wages have not kept pace with rising rents, and our safety nets including eviction protection have been underfunded for decades. We are seeing more than 2,000 eviction filings a month - that's more than a third higher rates than pre-pandemic. Continuing these funds without any cuts makes budget sense and addresses one of Oregonians' top concerns - the research clearly shows that it's 5-10 times less expensive to prevent homelessness than to re-house people who have fallen into homelessness.

In over a decade of experience working with Oregon tenants at the Community Alliance of Tenants (also known as CAT), I have seen and heard and taken to heart the fact that we are at the front line of keeping people housed who don't have the housing stability that higher income tenants and homeowners enjoy. At CAT, we have a renters' rights hotline and we connect tenants to legal support and rent assistance. We also have organizers to support people in substandard housing to unite with their neighbors to push their landlords to make needed repairs etc.

I am haunted daily by the reality faced by our community - people my coworkers and I talk to who are on the edge of losing housing or who have lost their homes already and are struggling to get back to stability. So many low income renters are trying to remain stable with the cards stacked against them; renters living with chronic illness who already used their savings to survive and are just one ER visit away from job loss, single parent families with small children juggling work and the needs of their children (Oregon has the highest rate of youth homelessness in the nation.), vulnerable seniors battling poor housing conditions who literally can't make it through a move or eviction

and are battling for their lives (Elderly Oregonians are now the fastest-growing group losing their homes). These are the people we work with every day and the funds need to be there for them.

Emergency rent assistance, legal assistance, and prevention service and navigation programs reduce the trauma, job loss, school disruption, and health risks that come with homelessness.

Please prioritize the critical and proven safety net services continued by POPS 504 and 505.

Thank you for your work and your time.

Jensi Albright

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