

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and members of the committee,

Re: Support for SB 282-1, Tenant COVID Protections

For the record, my name is Jennifer Peskin and I am a landlord here to testify in support of tenant stability. Thank you for taking up SB 282-1. I strongly support this bill, which is important for our community and our state.

The bill will stabilize renter households, and ensure that there is time for state and federal rent assistance to reach landlords and resolve back rent debt.

An estimated 11-16% of renters have fallen behind on rent. With dim prospects for recovering lost income, renting Oregonians need more time to stabilize their families. As nearly a half a billion dollars of state and federal tenant and landlord assistance are being distributed, we must ensure that people have time to access assistance, and aren't unfairly evicted after the moratorium ends. A temporary setback during COVID shouldn't make it impossible to rent in the future.

This is not a partisan issue- all Oregonians should feel safe in their homes during this pandemic- children need it for stability as they reenter school. Parents need it as they navigate these terrible times. Single people can often barely afford to rent at all with rental prices being way beyond affordable for the wages in most towns. We are already facing a housing crisis, let us create a safety net that supports our citizens not just now but into the future.

I have watched as the side streets and freeway entrances of Bend have filled with campers and tent cities. This has increased exponentially since the pandemic struck. How do we live with ourselves if we don't help people. Black and brown bodied people are even more at risk given the history of this country's discriminatory housing policies. We now know better, we must do better.

People are trying to make rent- using savings, borrowing money, they are doing whatever they can do. This is not about people being lazy or wanting to take government handouts. I don't believe it is ever about that, but particularly now, it is not.

As we move into the next stage of the COVID pandemic, we must acknowledge the ongoing difficulty that continues to face our most vulnerable communities. We must act to ensure that the fallout from the COVID pandemic does not sentence Oregonians who rent their homes to lasting collateral consequences. We urge you to pass SB 282-1.

Thank you for your work on this important matter.
Jennifer