

Oregon State Legislature
Joint Ways and Means Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

4-16-21

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner-Hayward, Rayfield and Members of the Committee:

My name is Colleen Regalbuto; I live in White Salmon, WA, and am a volunteer community mediator with Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center, located just across the Columbia River in Hood River, OR. I respectfully request that you support an investment in Eviction Avoidance Mediation programs.

Recently, I co-mediated a case in which the two parties began the process angry and hurt and one was considering filing a lawsuit. After a two hour mediation session, the parties had discussed their disagreements, come to a peaceful resolution, and agreed to treat one another with respect in the future. Resolving this case through a facilitated discussion was ultimately less stressful and more productive for the clients than a lawsuit, and saved our court system time and money. This example shows the power of community mediation programs.

The earlier we can bring those at-risk of eviction to a conversation with their housing provider, the more likely that the housing provider will get financial stability, and the more likely a tenant can achieve housing stability. Getting agreements prior to an eviction being filed prevents the eviction being held on their record-- a Scarlet "E" that further complicates future home stability for that family.

The willingness of policymakers to commit resources to protect vulnerable community members from unnecessary eviction may determine the amount of strain the impact of Covid-19 has on our community members as well as our communities' homelessness resources. A lack of investment in an eviction avoidance mediation program could harm our fragile housing sector for years to come.

I hope you will prioritize funding mediation as a tool for eviction prevention. Thank you for serving our community.

Sincerely,



Colleen Regalbuto

Volunteer Community Mediator with Six Rivers Dispute Resolution Center: Hood River, OR

cregalbu@gmail.com

503 560 6402