

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

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

My name is Kon Damas and I live in Talent. I am a mediator with more than 30 years' experience handling a variety of cases, including evictions. I respectfully request that you support an investment in Eviction Avoidance Mediation programs in Oregon.

A recent eviction mediation highlights the life-changing potential of mediation. A newly single parent of two children was facing eviction for failing to pay the space rent on their manufactured home. Landlord's agent wished to decline mediation and proceed to the eviction trial but the judge encouraged the parties to "at least try". At mediation, the tenant explained that the other parent had recently left the marriage, a child became ill, and tenant lost a job due to inability to find child care. The tenant acknowledged the late rent issue and thanked the agent for allowing a paying roommate without the usual application fees. Upon hearing these details, the agent softened and shared that they themselves had been raised by a single parent and had no desire to put children on the street.

The mediation took less than an hour, full payment over time was agreed to, and all left relieved and satisfied. This mediation avoided catastrophe for the family and financial loss for the landlord. This outcome could not happen in a trial as a judge is limited to deciding possession only.

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. A lack of investment in an eviction avoidance mediation program could further harm our strained housing sector for years to come.

Thank you for working on this aspect of Oregon's housing stability situation.

Sincerely,
Kon Damas