

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 Elizabeth Burton and I live in Baker City, Oregon. I am a mediator volunteering with the Eastern Oregon Mediation Center in La Grande. I respectfully request that you support an investment in an Eviction Avoidance Mediation program.

I recently mediated a landlord-tenant dispute in a Umatilla County manufactured home park. The tenant owned her manufactured home but was renting a lot in the park. She was being threatened with eviction after several disputes with the onsite managers regarding failure to follow park rules (i.e., recycling/waste disposal). The tenant stopped communicating with the managers. In mediation, the tenant disclosed that she was planning to move within seven days to take an out-of-State job; she didn't want to engage with the managers, so she had delayed in notifying them. She planned to leave her mobile home in the park and offer it for sale. When the owner became aware that the tenant was leaving voluntarily, he offered to provide her with information about the next steps in marketing her home. They re-established contact, and the eviction process ceased. The tenant was able to relocate without having an eviction on her record.

The earlier we can bring those at-risk of eviction to conversation with their housing provider, the more likely that both parties will come to an agreement resulting in a positive outcome. Evictions are costly for housing providers and create impediments for tenants in securing their next home. Eviction is also often traumatizing beyond the financial and physical disruptions.

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,



Elizabeth C. Burton