



April 22, 2021

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

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

My name is Patrick Sponsler. I live in Eugene and I direct the Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution where I represent 15 community centers that provide low-to-no cost dispute resolution services across Oregon. I respectfully request that you support an investment in a Pre-Eviction Avoidance Mediation program.

Community Dispute Resolution Centers have close to a 40-year history of resolving conflicts for Oregon's families, neighborhoods, and communities. The Centers have demonstrated their ability to mobilize quickly and respond to the needs of Oregonians multiple times and in situations similar to the looming eviction crisis. For example, the ongoing and successful foreclosure avoidance mediation program and the mandatory mediation program for manufactured housing communities.

The eviction moratorium will end. Rental assistance will run out, and there will be community members facing eviction. Bringing those at-risk of eviction to an early conversation with their housing provider enhances opportunities to find solutions and helps to avoid adding more people to the homeless population. If a judge orders an eviction, the tenant must move out within days, which is often the beginning of a common pattern leading to living without a home or possessions. In addition, the tenant has an eviction record, making it difficult, if not impossible, to find housing. And, the housing provider has very little chance of recovering back rent.

Beyond the individual impacts of evictions, evictions hurt communities. The downstream costs of evictions are staggering as outlined by the PSU's Cost of Eviction report. Investing in mediation to prevent evictions can save millions of dollars by reducing expenditures in shelter care, health care, foster care, and other social services. Private evictions have public costs.

It is my strong hope that you will prioritize funding mediation as a tool that equitably supports tenants and housing providers and prevents the cascading effects of evictions. Thank you for your service to our community.

Best,

Patrick Sponsler, MPA  
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OOCDR Administrator