

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Wlnsvey Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan, Members of the Committee,
Re: Support for SB 282A, Tenant COVID Protections

I am a Black woman. I am a renter in Portland. I currently live in an apartment complex that is run by a corporate management company. I am one of the tens of thousands of renters in Oregon who have been profoundly impacted by COVID-19.

Since March, when things shut down, I have been unemployed and unable to pay rent this entire time. It took me months to finally receive Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. In the interim I was fortunate to have access to mutual aid, various grant reliefs, and the rental protections the legislature has passed with the eviction moratorium—it has helped me manage and for that I feel grateful.

Still, I haven't been able to keep up with my utilities. I already live a very minimal life and I cannot simply budget my way out of this pandemic. It's unjustifiable to be punished for being unable to pay rent right now. Tenants should never be in the position of choosing between food or rent and that is what I have had to do.

The pandemic is far from over but there has been little certainty that necessary assistance will continue to be available. Personally, I'm incredibly scared of being evicted. I grew up in poverty with a single mother, and over the course of my childhood she had multiple evictions on her record. I have felt firsthand how devastating of an impact an eviction can have on your ability to find safe and stable housing. I have been homeless, I have lived in motels, I have never in my life had housing in one place for longer than 3 years. My current residence is where I have lived the longest. I am very familiar with what it is like to live with housing insecurity.

As an adult I have worked tirelessly to put myself in a position to not experience those same hardships ever again but to no fault of my own, like many other people, this pandemic has had a devastating impact on my life that I could not have prepared for. The security that SB 282 offers by protecting tenants credit and rental history from pandemic-related damage would be an enormous relief.

Portland has a history of displacing working-class Black folks like me. COVID has the potential to escalate racial disparities and displacement 10-fold. We need solutions to this crisis that does not leave anyone out. Renters need more time to pay back rent. Renters need protections from retaliation. With wildfires compounding COVID, renters need to be able to care for our communities and offer each other housing without risking eviction. I urge you to pass SB 282A and take a much needed step towards protecting renters, such as myself.

Morgan Cain
Portland, OR

