

Yes on SB 282A

COVID Tenant Protection Bill



The statewide eviction moratorium was a lifeline during the COVID crisis, but it ends on June 30, 2021, before all the state and federal housing assistance will be distributed. SB 282A—refined in work groups with tenant advocates and landlord representatives—will extend the grace period through February 2022, will allow people to share housing without fear of eviction during the COVID emergency, and will protect people's records from being permanently stained due to eviction.

The story of Oregon renters during the pandemic is one of resilience and perseverance. But they need certainty now that they won't lose their homes this summer. After the moratorium expires in July, renters need time to get caught up on back-due rent. SB 282A needs to pass as soon as possible to give them peace of mind.

Community Stories



MARYANNE KELLEY

NORTH BEND, OR

I'm an in-home caretaker in North Bend and I make \$15.77 per hour. I have diabetes that makes me highly vulnerable to COVID, so my work options have been limited. When COVID first hit, I started paying my rent months in advance in case I lost my job. Even so, I'm not making enough to live. I've been late on many of my bills, accumulating late charges. It all adds up and I'm worried about how I'll keep my lights and my internet on. I've been homeless before, and I'm especially scared that my son is at risk of losing his home.

My son has mental health conditions and the pandemic has been really hard for him. He's a single dad and is behind on his rent. If he and his one-year old baby were to be evicted, I am afraid to help them because of occupancy limits on my lease.

On the streets, my son won't be able to access the mental health support he needs and his conditions would only get worse. The landlord has already been coming over to his house and harassing him for rent owed.

If we're able to stay in our current housing, we'll be able to keep working to pay things back. Lawmakers have the power to pass SB 282A and keep low-income and vulnerable tenants like me and my son safe, with a roof over our heads.

KENNETH WILSON

PORTLAND, OR



I work in healthcare and, despite a pandemic ensuring we need health care workers more than ever, the profession is no guarantee you'll be able to pay the rent. Back in May my employer cut the pay of nearly 6,000, causing many to fall behind on rent. These impacts are still being felt today.

Even those of us who are working during the pandemic won't be able to be caught up by July. We need more time to pay back rent and to access federal rent assistance.

I work the graveyard shift in psychiatric emergency services doing behavioral health assistance. I'm doing everything I can to keep up with the rent because my landlord has said things that make it clear he wants to raise the rent and I think if he could evict me, he would. There are so many people working in health care who are in the same situation. It just isn't right.

TOSHA MORGAN-PLATT

PORTLAND, OR



I lost my job as Lead Parking Attendant in March, 2020. I wasn't able to return to work until October and the odd jobs I took on didn't cut it. I stopped paying my electric bill and cut out essential insurances. Even so, I fell behind on rent. While I've been able to access some rental assistance, I am still behind both \$3,000 on rent and another \$1,300 on my electric bill.

I am a single mother with three children all living at home, one of whom is disabled. We've all had to cut back in order to get by. We're scrambling to get back on our feet. SB 282A would help us do that.

There are health and sanitation issues in my house that have escalated over the last year—mice, roaches. I've had to carry the weight of any repairs and vermin myself. On top of this my landlord has been reaching out every week about my back rent. It's so stressful—people shouldn't have to live like this. SB 282A would give me the time to pay my back rent and look for safer and healthier housing for me and my family. The key is that I, like many Oregonian renters, just need more time.

If SB 282A doesn't pass, I'd likely face eviction in July. I'd have to move back to Wyoming and live with my parents or be homeless in the street. I am thankful that lawmakers have been listening to our voices thus far, but they can't stop now. Oregon desperately needs the protections from SB 282A. No one deserves to be made homeless because of COVID.

CHEVELLE BARHAM

TIGARD, OR



Shortly before the pandemic hit I was living with my mom after leaving an abusive relationship of six years. Then a year ago, I moved to my own place. At first, it wasn't horrible. I was really happy to have secured a place for me and my four-year-old daughter. As shut down orders progressed I had to stop working since I work as a hair stylist. By October, I had drained all of my funds.

Even with the eviction protections, I've been getting notices from my property management company since January pressuring me to pay rent and reminding me that I'll owe it all—at this point 5k come July. I don't know when I'll be able to work again.

I can't afford to rent a space in my old salon and most salons aren't accepting new stylists. It's really stressful, especially as a single mom. I've had to take out loans just to get by and make sure we have food. The stress is getting to me, causing anxiety and depression. It's all been so exhausting.

This is no one's fault. I didn't choose not to pay rent. If I am evicted, I don't know what I would do—I certainly don't have the credit to even get more loans to pay it off. For my daughter's safety, I'd have to move back in with my mom. But all the other families in my neighborhood, they're all in the same situation with kids. What's going to happen to them?

CHRISTY HERNANDEZ

SALEM, OR



The eviction moratorium is keeping my family off the streets, for now. I have three young boys—1.5, 3, and 5 years old—home with me and the past months have been really stressful.

We haven't been able to work since COVID and have fallen behind thousands in rent. We've had to accrue other debt and haven't even been able to pay our water and electric bill.

I'm trying to do everything I can to help my family get by, but even so we're running out of food for the kids at the end of the month. The pandemic has been really hard for my sons. My oldest is struggling with remote kindergarten and my middle son is autistic. Having us all home has made me especially grateful that he can have his own room. Without the moratorium, all five of us would be living on top of each other in our van. We have nowhere else to go.



RUHIYYIH BAGLEY

ALOHA, OR

Before the pandemic, I worked full time offering therapy for children and teens on the spectrum. I really loved my job but I had to take a leave of absence when COVID hit.

I've been hospitalized four times for lung-related illnesses so I couldn't take the risk at work. Initially, I kept paying rent with savings and started cutting down on other expenses but it just all added up. I started getting desperate—I've sold many belongings, everything I could. I'm 51 and I've been a renter my whole life. Never once have I been late on rent or had a complaint but this situation is unprecedented.

The rental assistance I've been able to receive has been an absolute blessing but it's hard to get through. It's been a roller coaster and it's giving me extreme anxiety. I have PTSD and some days I can't even function because I'm so worried about where I'll live and how I'll pay rent. I'm really worried about what will happen to me and so many others when the moratorium is lifted. I'm one of the 89k people in Oregon who could lose their homes. People are going to be in tents. People are already freezing in tents outside. It's only going to get worse. We desperately need lawmakers to invest in housing for our communities and give people more time to get back on their feet after the pandemic.

ROLAND JASTILLANA

HILLSBORO, OR



Before the pandemic I worked in the roofing union but I got laid off when COVID hit. It's been difficult and it certainly wasn't something I was prepared for. A lot of us weren't prepared for this. I've always gone out there and made whatever I needed happen for myself. I've always been resilient but times have really changed. I'm grateful that my family has helped me out some but I've still had to choose between bills—phone, insurance, or car—stuff like that.

I'm a mechanic by passion. I fix things—everything I can, I always have. Now, lawmakers are in the position to fix the situation for us renters.

Nobody was prepared for a situation like this and I'm so grateful that there are people working to protect us. When I learned about these protections, I felt my lungs expand with all the air I could suddenly breathe in. We need relief for our communities.



WILLIAMS GRIMOLDI

PORTLAND, OR

Everything was going great for me until COVID happened. My partner and I work in food and beverage, so we were some of the first people to lose our jobs. We haven't been able to pay rent since August. The landlords have already given us an eviction notice—it's only the moratorium that's keeping a roof over our heads. We're owed months of unemployment benefits that haven't come through but when they do, it'll be too late—our landlord won't renew our lease.

Even so, we're doing our best to pay our rent. We're behind on credit card payments, on everything. You name it. There were months we had to cut back on groceries in order to try and pay some of our rent.

My partner and I both have health conditions and the pandemic has made it really hard to take care of ourselves. If an eviction went through, it would be catastrophic. Oregon renters need time to access assistance to help us recover.



BRIAN

ALBANY, OR

I've lived in my home for five years and I've never been late on a single rent payment. I even used to be the on-site manager. But, when COVID hit, this all went south. I plan to pay my rent. I just need more time.

In May, 2020 in the midst of the pandemic our property management company raised our rent. Just three months prior, I was signing paperwork for a new managerial job, then the offer was suspended. It just disappeared. It was only thanks to rental assistance that we've been able to keep up with payments thus far. Then, in January, when we sent them the declaration of financial hardship, they started calling my parents—our cosigners—to harass them about missed payments.

The property management company is now really adversarial and it's become the primary stressor in my life. I have two kids—four and three—and my biggest concern is keeping them happy and healthy. We're stretching our money as best as we can but even so we owe the landlord nearly \$3,000. This is the only home our kids know. They were born and raised here, grown up here. It would be really sad to have to leave it behind. I hope the state passes an extension on the grace period to pay rents to allow more time for people to get caught up. Ending the moratorium and forcing people into homelessness is not the solution.

MONEI MONROE

SALEM, OR



I moved into my house right before COVID hit. I work in construction but haven't been able to work during the pandemic. I was stressed before but now I'm four months behind on rent and it's gotten really bad. I have a young daughter and I help support my stepdad, my cousin, and my caretaker who all live with us. We try to take care of each other as much as possible but together my family and I just can't make ends meet. We haven't been able to keep up with bills—our water has been shut off, our electricity is going out.

Recently, I've been crying a lot, losing my appetite, and having panic attacks because I just don't know what might happen next. My physical health has been deteriorating as well and the doctor told me it must be stress-induced since they can't figure out what's wrong.

I'm terrified I won't be able to take care of my family. Families need more protections to get us through this pandemic without suffering permanent damage.

If it doesn't happen, there will be a lot more homeless people. If we do get evicted, we'd have to live in my car, but my car is tiny and it's breaking down and I don't have any money to fix it. But we don't have anywhere else to go.

AUSTIN ORTH

YACHATS, OR



The eviction moratorium is the only reason that my girlfriend and I have a roof over our heads. I moved to Yachats from Idaho five years ago. It was a childhood dream of mine to return to the Oregon coast where I used to visit family. It took me a lot of planning and financing to get here. Over the last year, I've lost most of my work. Then, a couple months ago, both my girlfriend and I finally got COVID. After being sick and without being able to work consistently, paying rent has become impossible. We're behind two months on rent—it's really stressful. I'm scared we'll fall more and more behind and we'll get stuck owing something exorbitant, like 10k all at once. If we can't catch up, we'll be without a home. I worked really hard to get all way out here—Yachats is my home.

Now, I might lose my home just because I got COVID and fell behind on rent. I can't imagine what it would feel like to get a letter in the mail, an eviction notice, that says this is no longer my home and good luck on the streets. Any sort of help lawmakers can give us, we'd be so grateful.



MORGAN CAIN

PORTLAND, OR

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 able 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 282A 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.



JASMINE

BEAVERTON, OR

Oregon lawmakers passed eviction assistance and the eviction moratorium in December, legislation that helped Oregonians enormously. Now, we need some additional assistance to keep us on our feet.

I've been employed my entire adult life but I lost my job during COVID. I've never been on so many interviews before —the job market is intense right now, even for someone like me with a lot of job experience. During this period, even while buckling down on my finances, I fell behind several thousand in rent. I was able to access some rental assistance, which helped me get by, but I need more time to cover the remaining back rent I owe. Even now that I'm employed again, I'm making half of what I was previously. The grace period SB 282A would provide would be such a relief for me.

I am a single mom with a two-year old daughter and my best friend lives with us. This extension is an absolute necessity to help us and our communities stabilize and recover.

I used to work for homeless services, so I understand the impact of being barred from housing because of eviction or credit. It completely stops people from moving forward, and I wouldn't want that to happen to anyone due to these unimaginable circumstances. Oregon was already struggling with homelessness but the current crisis of reduced wages, increasing costs, and rental issues during COVID was the tipping point for many of us. SB 282A would prevent the impacts of COVID from lasting a lifetime for vulnerable renters.

Housing is not a luxury; it's a human right. Pass SB 282A and help Oregonians keep a roof over our heads.

KYLE HOLTkamp

PORTLAND, OR



The eviction moratorium has been a godsend. It has allowed me to feel a little safer—to give me more time to make a plan.

I had to stop working at the beginning of the pandemic. With unemployment, my income dropped to 30% of what it was previously. My rent expenses started eating up 75% of my monthly income. This leaves me with just a couple hundred dollars or less to live off of. While I've been able to keep up with monthly rent payments so far, doing so has nearly destroyed me.

I'm living below the poverty line. I've had to cut out all spending in order to make my rent. I ask lawmakers to hear the pain we renters are going through and support us.

This insecurity has profoundly impacted me, financially and emotionally. If I was evicted, I'd have to leave the Portland area. I can't put words to how deeply the pandemic has impacted me and I'm seeing my friends all go through the same struggles. It's not our fault that we are struggling—there's just not enough of a net to catch us.