



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council
6401 SE Foster ▪ Portland, OR 97206

June 14, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Holvey, and Members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of Senate Bill 278. My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon State Council. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 85,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

SEIU strongly supports SB 278 to protect renters who have applied for rent assistance and to support the distribution of federal rent assistance. We are proud to see the Oregon legislature take significant steps towards preventing evictions. We now have state and federal rent assistance resources available to help keep families safe and stable in their homes. Unfortunately, these rent assistance dollars are not getting out the door quickly enough to prevent evictions after the expiration of the moratorium.

We believe that no one should have to worry about keeping a roof over their loved ones' head or where they are going to sleep at night, especially nowadays as Oregon is currently experiencing increasingly dangerous wildfire seasons and navigating a respiratory pandemic. Both disasters which have severely impacted the homes and lives of our members; many of whom are low-income frontline workers.

Throughout this pandemic, our members have been doing the work that is deemed essential for our state to properly function. And yet, it is our low-income and BIPOC workers who have borne the economic brunt of the pandemic both because they are most likely to have lost income, are more likely to rent their homes, or are more likely to have contracted COVID. It is unjust to ask them to support us as they repeatedly put their health at risk and yet not support them when it comes to their housing situation.

With two and a half weeks to go before the eviction moratorium ends, we are deeply concerned that not enough assistance will get out the door in time to protect people from losing their homes starting in July. The Oregon Legislature must take action to protect rent assistance applicants from eviction and ensure distribution of federal dollars to address rent debt. SB 278 will ensure that people who have applied for rent assistance do not lose their homes while their applications are pending.

We must act to ensure that the fallout from the COVID pandemic does not sentence Oregonians who rent their homes to lasting collateral consequences. It would be tragic if in these final moments, people lost their homes because money didn't get allocated on time. We cannot allow all the good work we've done to keep people in

their homes to fall apart now. We need to support our low-wage workers and renters now more than ever. We urge you to pass SB 278.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU, Oregon State Council