

January 27, 2023

Testimony in support of Bill #SB799

Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, Members of the Committee,

My name is Thien Vo, my pronouns are he/him and I am the Field Organizer at APANO, a culturally specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work.

Reducing evictions is an essential part of our housing and homelessness response. As Gov. Kotek and legislative leadership commit to increasing the housing supply and rehousing our homeless neighbors; we must also ensure that the people who are housed today don't end up on the streets themselves.

We know this is true because it is happening today. APANO's Community Development and Organizing Teams are hearing first hand from renters and APANO's base that folks are experiencing their rent payments becoming so high that they are often needing to work multiple jobs, multi-families co-living together, and more families losing stable housing and currently trying to access programs and assistance.

Evictions for non-payment are skyrocketing. There have been more than 2,000 court evictions a month, every single month since October, when pandemic eviction protections expired. Before the pandemic, the average monthly rate was approximately 1,500 a month. More than 80% of current eviction filings are because rent was late.

We must make evictions rare and when they do happen, more fair. And during the pandemic, the legislature did exactly that. Thanks to the pandemic protections there were fewer evictions, and fewer people displaced from their homes.

SB 799 is a fair approach that gives people who are behind on their rent a reasonable amount of time to catch up and, if they need it, locate, apply and receive rent assistance. It would address the fact that evictions in Oregon are too fast and don't give people a chance to protect their homes.

SB 799 would:

- Reinstating a safe harbor period of up to 60 days for people who have notified the landlord they have applied for rent assistance so no one is evicted when help is on the way.
- Reinstating the requirement to provide access to eviction information in the six most common languages spoken in Oregon.
- Reinstating ability for tenants to have guests and share housing costs as long as building rules and codes are followed.

We strongly urge you to pass SB 799 as quickly as possible as part of the Homelessness Prevention Package that includes \$100 million in rent new rent assistance, SB 611 / HB 2733 to limit the exorbitant and abusive rent increases too many landlords are imposing this year, and the Rental Market Data Bill for greater transparency into this essential component of Oregon's housing availability.

Thank you,
Thien Vo
APANO
Field Organizer