

January 30, 2023

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 799

Good morning Chair Jama, members of the committee,

My name is Alli Sayre and I'm the elected organizing coordinator for Portland Tenants United, the Portland city-wide tenant union. Through organizing, direct action, coalition building, and civic engagement, Portland Tenants United fights to keep people in their homes, and to achieve dignity and security for all tenants. I'm testifying today in strong **support** of SB 799, which would bolster our meager statewide tenants rights with some real protections against spurious and short-sighted nonpayment evictions.

After the eviction moratorium expired in June 2021, PTU members knocked on the door of every Multnomah County tenant facing nonpayment eviction for several months before the county took on the outreach. Most of these tenants had no idea they could apply for rent assistance. Most of the tenants we talked to directly were able to get their eviction stayed while their rent application was processed. What these conversations reminded us is that under current Oregon law, landlords have every incentive to evict tenants who fall through the cracks instead of working with them. SB 799 would remove many of those incentives.

The two main causes of nonpayment evictions are pretty straightforward. Tenants do not have the money to pay their rent. Landlords refuse to accept vouchers, partial payments, or work with tenants to help get them current on their rent. I can't tell you how many times a tenant has reached out to PTU asking for help because their landlord refused to accept rent assistance from an outside agency. The language in SB 799 prohibiting evictions where a landlord caused a tenant to not pay rent would alone make a tremendous impact in preventing tenants from being evicted for nonpayment of rent.

The landlord lobby is probably going to say their usual line about how they don't need to be regulated because there are already enough regulations. Or a sob story about a so-called mom & pop landlord who is just trying to make ends meet. And of course my favorite, that if we regulate landlords they will sell their properties, as if said properties then magically disappear and do not become owner-occupied or continue to be a rental under a new owner. Make no



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mistake—negotiating with MFNW and others to try to get their support is like negotiating with terrorists. They will never be happy. There is no regulation they will support.

At the end of the day, the problem is that the tenants cannot afford their rent. This bill absolutely is crucial to preventing evictions, but if we really want to cure this problem instead of putting a band-aid on it, we need to ensure tenants can actually find affordable, safe, and secure housing. Please vote to move SB 799 forward and also the companion bills that will help address the overall problem, that the rent is too damn high.

Sincerely,

Alli Sayre
Portland Tenants United Organizing Committee