



January 30, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Housing
From: **Isa Peña, Innovation Law Lab**
Re: Support for SB 799 to reduce evictions and prevent homelessness

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

We strongly urge you to pass SB 799 as quickly as possible as part of the Homelessness Prevention Package. Innovation Law Lab is a nationally-recognized nonprofit based in Oregon that leverages law, technology and organizing to advance immigrant and refugee rights. In the last several years, we have seen how our immigrant and refugee community have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and have seen housing become one of the top priorities for our immigrant and refugee communities. Through our work with Oregon Worker Relief, we have seen the importance of creating a housing response that works for all of us.

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 that people are living on the edge financially. [According to the state economist, more than 50% of Oregon renters do not have enough money left over](#) for food, medicine, basic necessities. This is exceptionally true for our immigrant and refugee communities. When people on the edge get evicted, it is all too easy to fall into homelessness. COVID-19 caused unemployment that peaked at 14% and left renters without work for long periods of time. Through our work with OWR, we were able to provide one-time payments to individuals and families who needed them but saw barriers to accessing traditional systems of aid. Time and time again, Oregon Worker Relief Fund applicants indicated that they were struggling to pay rent or stay housed.

While there are no national or local statistics of how many evicted people experience homelessness, surveys in several communities say that between 12-37% of people who have been evicted became homeless at some point, or say eviction was a cause of homelessness. Even at the most conservative estimate, if 12% of the 2,000 eviction cases this month alone experienced homelessness, that increases our current crisis by 240 households statewide.

As an organization fighting for immigrant and refugee justice, we urge you to support SB 799 along with the full Homelessness Prevention Package.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Isa Peña". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Isa Peña
Director of Strategy
Innovation Law Lab
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