



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

Re: Support for SB 799 to reduce evictions and prevent homelessness

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today. Our names are Nathan Teske and Itzel Hernandez Spehar, Bienestar's Executive Director and Director of Policy and Advocacy, respectively. Bienestar's mission is to build housing, hope, and community for the wellbeing of Latinx, immigrants, and all families in need.

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.

The current 72-hour window creates a challenging scenario for tenants who have fallen behind on rent because the organizations providing rent assistance are at capacity and are not able to process applications in such a short period of time. Therefore, families are left with no choice but to become homeless or double up because there is a shortage of affordable housing units and waiting lists are long in our county.

Evictions for non-payment are skyrocketing. From October 2022, when pandemic protections expired, through December 2022, there have been an average of 2,155 court evictions a month, every month. Before the pandemic, the average monthly rate was approximately 1,500 a month. This is a spike of 43%. 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.

It is time to take those lessons learned and apply them to today with SB 799.

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 1) Reinstate the increased time between nonpayment notice and eviction court from 72 hours to 10 days to give people time to access assistance, 2) Reinstate 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, and 3) Reinstate the requirement to provide access to eviction information in the six most common languages spoken in Oregon.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Nathan Teske, Executive Director

Itzel Hernandez Spehar, Director of Policy and Advocacy