

Submitter: Evan Finley
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Education
Measure: SB600

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Education Committee:

Thank you for your work and services to our state.

My name is Evan Finley and I am a housing stability case manager with Neighbor to Neighbor, one of the Oregon Dispute Resolutions Centers that provides free mediation services to Marion, Linn and Benton Counties. We are supported by the Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution (OOCDR) at the University of Oregon.

I encourage you to support SB 600.

This year at our center, we have worked on more than 900 cases in small claims court, FED court, manufactured home parks, schools, neighborhoods and business.

Simply put, there are not enough resources available to adequately meet the need for housing stability in our state. My role, at Neighbor to Neighbor, is to develop cases and coordinate mediation sessions. I frequently talk to clients who have exhausted rental assistance (or it is spent and unavailable) and are still facing eviction. The majority of the time this comes down to lack of communication between tenants and landlords. Housing is a basic need, and when threatened, the situations are inevitably stressful and emotionally charged-- always for the tenant(s), and often for the landlords. From one perspective it is about people's homes and shelter; but the other reality is rentals are businesses that can not provide housing if they are not profitable. Fortunately, mediation is a powerful tool for bridging this divide. I have observed how helpful mediation can be to communicate the needs of each party, and also developing solutions that are crafted to the nuanced unique situations of people whos housing is threatened.

I have been encouraged to find that many landlords are willing to work with their tenants. There are a number of landlords/property-management companies that we work with on a regular basis, but it is not enough. Our organization has made a concerted effort to both market to tenants in need and to landlords/property management companies. We hope to be able to continue providing mediation to improve housing stability.

With an additional funding allocation to the Oregon Office for Community Dispute Resolution, my center will increase our training and equipping of mediators,

implement more school programs, expand our restorative justice programs and sustain our eviction avoidance program.

Respectively,

Evan Finley