

Community Law

METROPOLITAN PUBLIC DEFENDER

February 17, 2024

My name is Ariel Test, and I am the Managing Attorney at the Metropolitan Public Defender's Community Law Division, where I oversee our Collateral Consequences Program. This program represents low-income tenants who face significant barriers in securing safe, stable housing due to eviction records, and I am firmly opposed to HB 2305.

Thank you for allowing me to submit this written testimony.

Each year, my team and I represent hundreds of clients who are diligently working toward securing housing and employment. Our clients include families, survivors of domestic violence, veterans, and individuals committed to achieving stability in their lives. For those with eviction histories — or even dismissed evictions — the challenges they face in securing housing are profound, often despite having stable income and employment. While we strive to help them overcome these barriers, we are not always successful. The reality is that most Oregonians in this situation lack legal representation, leaving them even more vulnerable.

HB 2305 would only worsen these conditions, leading to an increase in unnecessary and devastating evictions of veterans, families, and individuals. At a time when rental assistance is becoming harder to access and the waiting period for aid has grown longer, this bill would allow landlords to evict tenants awaiting assistance without any opportunity to cure. The consequence? More people with evictions on their rental history and unable to secure housing, exacerbating the growing unhoused crisis in our state.

This bill is entirely unnecessary. Landlords already have sufficient tools at their disposal to address lease violations, including non-curable termination notices. Furthermore, landlords often benefit from rental assistance funds, yet HB 2305 would allow them to take advantage of these resources and then evict tenants without any right to cure. This creates an unjust and potentially exploitative dynamic.

Additionally, HB 2305 is dangerously broad and opens the door to retaliatory and discriminatory evictions. The very purpose of just-cause eviction protections is to shield tenants from such harmful practices. This bill undermines those protections, increasing the likelihood of biased and arbitrary enforcement.

The consequences of eviction are devastating. They deepen financial hardship, disrupt children's education, erode mental health, and make it harder for tenants to secure future housing. But the impacts extend far beyond our clients and those experiencing evictions. Evictions destabilize entire communities, increasing rates of homelessness, escalating crime, and disproportionately harming low-income and minority populations. The ripple effects of evictions create a vicious cycle of economic and social instability, undermining neighborhood cohesion and security.

HB 2305 is a harmful, unnecessary measure that will only deepen Oregon's housing crisis. I urge you to oppose it.

Sincerely,
Ariel Test