

# Legislature OKs bill extending grace period for past-due rent

Oregon in line for \$222.5 million from President Biden's pandemic recovery plan

By PETER WONG  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown's signature awaits a bill that gives tenants more time to pay past-due rent stemming from the coronavirus pandemic and protects their future ability to rent.

The Oregon House sent Senate Bill 282 to the governor on a 39-17 vote on Tuesday, May 11.

Tosha Morgan-Platt — who lives in Portland with three children, one of them with disabilities — was among the tenants who submitted testimony in favor of the bill. She lost her job during the economic downturn that resulted from the pandemic more than a year ago, and subsequent work has not helped her earn enough to eliminate \$3,000 in past-due rent.

The bill allows Morgan-Platt and others an extended grace period until Feb. 28, 2022 —

instead of June 30 — to pay past-due rent going back to April 1, 2020. It does not forgive any rent, and it requires renters to be current on payments after July 1. But it would extend until Feb. 28, 2022, a moratorium on evictions for nonpayment of rent during the pandemic.

"This is a huge weight

*"The policies we passed last year have likely prevented many thousands of people from being evicted from their homes during the pandemic."*

— Rep. Julie Fahey, a Democrat from Eugene and chairwoman of the House Committee on Housing

off my shoulders and will give me or my landlord enough time to apply for rental assistance to cover the back rent," Morgan-Platt said in a statement furnished by Stable Homes for Oregon Families. "There are so many Oregonians in similar situations who lost jobs or income during COVID through no fault of our

own and are still struggling to catch up. As Oregon continues to face a statewide housing crisis and our communities are suffering, SB 282 is going to be a lifeline to protect us from eviction."

Rep. Julie Fahey, a Democrat from Eugene and chairwoman of the House Committee on Housing, said the bill banks on millions coming in state and federal aid to tenants and landlords.

"It is a reasonable compromise bill that sets the stage for a more equitable recovery," Fahey, the bill's floor manager and chief sponsor in the House, said. "By passing this bill, we can ensure that Oregon ten-

ants and landlords can get the full benefit of rental assistance coming to our state and help prevent the fallout from the pandemic following the most vulnerable Oregonians for years to come."

A Dec. 21 special session of the Legislature extended the evictions moratorium from Dec. 30 to June 30, and also set

aside a total of \$200 million for assistance — \$150 million for landlords and \$50 million for tenants. The Oregon Department of Housing and Community Services reported to the House committee on May 4 that \$40 million was paid from the landlord compensation fund in the first round in March.

Congress also passed two rounds of federal assistance for renters, the latest round approved in March. Oregon's senators announced May 10 the state will be in line for \$222.5 million from President Joe Biden's pandemic recovery plan, which became law in March. The state would get \$156.5 million, Portland, \$15.5 million; Multnomah County, \$3.8 million, Washington County, \$14.2 million, and Clackamas County, \$9.9 million. Other amounts will go to the counties that include Eugene, Salem and Medford.

"The policies we passed last year have likely prevented many thousands of people from being evicted from their homes during the pandemic," Fahey said. "Because we know that public health research has shown that eviction moratoriums helped prevent the spread of COVID-19,

we know that in addition to keeping people stably housed, those policies have saved lives."

## Other provisions

Among other provisions of SB 282, which was brokered by Sen. Kayse Jama, D-Portland, with tenant and landlord advocates:

- Potential landlords would be barred from screening out applicants based on COVID-era evictions. The bill would allow sealing of evictions during COVID from a tenant's record.

- Credit history reports would be barred on any late payments during the moratorium. Landlords would be barred from screening out tenants based on nonpayment of past-due rents during the eviction moratorium and grace period.

- Landlords could not evict tenants for doubling-up/occupancy limits that are narrower than current law, during the COVID period when people have had to share housing due to the pandemic and wildfires.

- Increased damages would remain in effect temporarily for retaliation violations by landlords during the COVID era.

All of the votes against

the final version were cast by Republicans, although three Republicans joined Democrats to vote for it.

"This bill has another side that has not been given any consideration," Rep. Kim Wallan, R-Medford, said.

A move by Republicans to send the bill back to committee failed on a party-line vote.

Rep. Jack Zika of Redmond said he sought an amendment that would have allowed landlords to check some tenant records unrelated to finances. He said his intent was not to block the bill itself, and that he felt an agreement was close.

"Nobody wants to see anybody evicted," he said.

Rep. Wlmsvey Campos, D-Aloha, says that as a case manager, she works with prospective tenants to help them apply for rental housing.

"I know there are backstops in place for checking on the past rental history of tenants," she said.

"What I do know, from doing the work I do, is that if we do not pass this, it will cause harm to our communities. We all know that bad actors exist, but I also know that folks want to be able to pay their rent so they can stay in housing."

# Younger adolescents get ready to receive COVID-19 vaccine

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH, KATHLEEN FOODY and SOPHIA TAREEN  
Associated Press

MISSION, Kan. — Parents, schools and vaccine clinics rushed to begin inoculating younger adolescents Tuesday, May 11, after U.S. regulators endorsed Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for children as young as 12, a decision seen as a breakthrough in allowing classroom instruction to resume safely around the country.

A handful of cities started offering shots to children ages 12 to 15 less than a day after the Food and Drug Administration gave the vaccine emergency use authorization for that age group. Most communities were waiting for a federal advisory committee that meets Wednesday to sign off on the move, while anxious families called clinics and pharmacies to ask about the soonest appointments.

In Atlanta, 12-year-old Jane Ellen Norman got her first dose of the Pfizer vaccine at Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Tuesday morning. The girl said she looked forward to having "a little bit more freedom."

Her mother, English Norman, said she also booked an appointment for her 14-year-old son immediately after learning that the FDA on Monday had declared the vaccine safe for the nearly 17 million 12- to 15-year-olds in the



Matt Slocum/Associated Press

Olivia Edwards, left, 13, of Flourtown, Pennsylvania, gets a bandage from registered nurse Philene Moore on Tuesday, May 11, 2021, after getting a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination at the King of Prussia Mall, Pennsylvania.

U.S. Now, the entire family — including Norman's husband, a physician, and their 17-year-old son — has begun the vaccination process.

"We're five for five," the 52-year-old artist said.

Most COVID-19 vaccines worldwide have been authorized for adults. Pfizer's vaccine is being used in multiple countries for teens as young as 16, and Canada recently became the first to expand use to children 12 and up. Parents, school administrators and public health officials elsewhere have eagerly awaited approval for the shot to be made available to more young people.

The official sign-off on the vaccine's use in the 12-15 age group will not occur until at least Wednesday, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention committee

meets. Local governments that began offering shots right away viewed the FDA decision on Monday as enough of a green light to start the process.

"Under all relevant legal authority, once the FDA gives approval, a prescriber is permitted to prescribe the vaccine," Kelly Cofrancisco, a spokesperson for Pennsylvania's Montgomery County, said as shots for residents 12 and up started Tuesday.

In Kansas City, Children's Mercy Hospital has run vaccine clinics for 16- to 21-year-olds since last month and plans to expand them to cover younger ages soon.

Dr. Ryan McDonough, a pediatrician who oversees the COVID-19 vaccine clinics, said he has been deluged with calls from patients, friends and relatives wanting to sign up their kids.

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