

People Facing Eviction Get Temporary Reprieve

New legislation gives added protection

By BEVERLY CORBELL
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

The Oregon Legislature gave final approval Tuesday to an amended bill that will give temporary relief to some people who are facing eviction when a current moratorium expires on June 30, but some say it doesn't go far enough and others claim it goes too far.

The "safe harbor" amendment will provide a 60-day grace period for renters who have applied but are still waiting for federal rent assistance aid. It will delay evictions for those who can show they have applied for help with their rent through Oregon Housing and Community Services.

Rep. Julie Fahey, D-Eugene, stated in a press release that many people are still struggling, and the bill gives them a chance to take advantage of rent assistance programs until they can get back on their feet.

"This bill gives tenants the time they need to access those resources without fear of an eviction."

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners supported the change.

"Evicting people who have applied for help is simply unfair. The bill ensures stability for tenants while getting resources to the hands of landlords."

But the bill doesn't go far enough, according to Kim McCarty, the executive director of the nonprofit



Kim McCarty

Community Alliance of Tenants. McCarty said the moratorium should instead be extended.

"We should stop making plans based on arbitrary time frames," she said. "We don't know when this public health emergency ends or when the economy will be fully back to normal."

The pandemic has hit service workers and low-income people particularly hard, she said.

"We should use a different metric and should give the government the authority to decide when an eviction emergency is over, just like the government can decide for homeowners facing foreclosure to extend every 90 days, we could give the health office au-

thority to decide when the eviction emergency is over," McCarty said.

Oregon wouldn't be in as much of a housing emergency if the state could get the \$200 million it's received in federal aid to renters fast enough, but there's not enough time before the June 30 deadline, which Gov. Kate Brown says legally she cannot change, according to the Associated Press, even though she was able to extend the state's mortgage foreclosure moratorium until the end of September. More federal funding is expected to be approved this fall.

Sybil Hebb, director of legislative advocacy at the Oregon Law Center, told the AP that the state legislature's work was based on the assumption that federal dollars would already have been distributed by now.

"We know now that rent assistance dollars cannot be processed quickly enough to prevent evictions after the expiration of the moratorium," she said.

House Majority Leader Barbara Smith said two things led to the slow state response: the extremely high levels of requests for rental assistance across the state and a lack of direction from the fed, which only release guidelines for the funding in May.

In addition to the amendment, Oregon lawmakers voted last month to extend the grace period for past due back rent to Feb. 28, 2020.

Portland Commissioner Dan Ryan, who oversees the Portland Housing Bureau, hopes that more renters apply for assistance and communicate with their landlord to avoid eviction.

"We are working together — the city, the county, the state, the federal government, the nonprofits, and

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Water Still Sickens Residents

Rosemont has new case of Legionnaire's disease

Multnomah County Public Health is working closely with Northwest Housing Alternatives to ensure proper water filter use after another resident of Rosemont Court was confirmed to be sick with Legionnaires' Disease.

Since March 17, following formal water mitigation efforts, health officials believe that three new cases of the disease at the affordable senior housing property may be related to not using faucet filters properly.

On Monday, the NHA housing provider made the decision to offer permanent relocation assistance to some 95 residents currently living at the Rosemont Court building, located at

597 N. Dekum St. Multnomah County officials said they strongly support the move.

Officials say Legionella is a common bacteria that can be found in many types of water sources. It infects someone after they inhale it in fine water mist. It is not spread by drinking water. It does not spread from one person to another. Most healthy people exposed to Legionella do not get sick. But for people with fragile underlying health, breathing in very small droplets of water with the bacteria can lead to severe pneumonia.

In January, the County worked with NHA to move almost 100 residents temporarily into motels after six residents were found to have Legionnaires' Disease, and another four residents were presumed to have the illness based on symptoms. One person who

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Multnomah County and Northwest Housing Alternatives are working to reduce risk to residents from an ongoing Legionnaires' Disease outbreak at Rosemont Court, an affordable senior housing property at 597 N. Dekum St.

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