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Senate Democrats Take Action to Provide Financial Relief to Oregonians

SALEM – Today, the Oregon Senate Democrats passed measures to address the critical needs that everyday Oregonians face during the COVID-19 crisis. A suite of bills approved today include housing security for renters, protections against foreclosures, the passage of vital regulations to protect vulnerable COVID-19 patients and the safeguarding of Oregonians' CARES Act relief dollars.

House Bill 4213 passed both chambers with bipartisan support. The bill extends the renter protections originally issued by Governor Kate Brown's Executive Order preventing evictions for nonpayment of rent. Today's vote will provide an additional three months of security for renters who have experienced a sudden lack of income during the onset of the recession, as well as a six-month grace period to pay any rent owed during the emergency period.

"Even before the COVID emergency, many Oregonians struggled to afford a place to live. Oregon's housing crisis has been worsened by the COVID crisis, when thousands of Oregonians lost their jobs due to the current public health crisis," said Senator Shemia Fagan (D-East Portland/North Clackamas) who chairs the Senate Committee on Housing and Development. "Our vote today to extend the evictions moratorium will give Oregon's renters stability and keep many Oregon families housed."

House Bill 4204 gives homeowners and property owners protections from foreclosures as Oregon's economy recovers from the COVID-caused recession.

"Home and property owners are struggling to pay their bills and prevent foreclosure as a result of this pandemic. This bill will help protect those who live in their own homes, as well as those who maintain rental housing, or who rent spaces to small businesses," said Senator Kathleen Taylor (D-Portland) who chairs the Senate Committee on Labor and Business. "By passing House Bill 4204 and extending foreclosure protections, we help home and property owners and all who depend on that property for housing or income."

Senator Sara Gelser (D-Corvallis), chair of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing, worked

relentlessly to craft and pass critical legislation that will protect Oregonians with disabilities from health care discrimination during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit Oregon, people with disabilities have faced increased pressure to consent to DNR/DNI orders and have been denied access to needed COVID testing. Restrictive hospital visitor policies have denied people with disabilities the ability to have a support person with them in the hospital to facilitate care and assist with disability related needs. This puts these Oregonians in grave danger,” said Senator Gelser. “In the face of such discrimination, people with disabilities have elected to avoid or delay medical care. Some individuals have died.”

“SB 1606 ensures end of life decisions are voluntary and make certain people with disabilities can access the support they need at the hospital,” said Senator Gelser. “I am certain this bill will save lives and am grateful that it will go into effect as soon as the governor signs it.”

House Bill 4212 contains a significant number of measures that make technical and substantive statutory changes to assist Oregonians during this significant crisis. Among those provisions is a policy that safeguards CARES Act funds from debt collection and garnishment.

“Oregonians have been waiting for another round of much-needed relief from the federal government,” said Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego). “When CARES Act funds came through, Oregonians were provided much-needed support for their families. Passing House Bill 4212 and ensuring that those funds cannot be taken away due to unpaid debts is a meaningful step. Oregon leaders must continue to put pressure on the federal government, to do two things: one, provide additional support to individuals immediately, and two, provide financial relief to the states so that we can continue to provide vital services to Oregonians.”

Earlier this year, the Legislature’s Emergency Board approved hundreds of millions of dollars to provide relief to struggling Oregonians. That included creating the Oregon Worker Relief Fund, allocating funds for rental relief and survivors of violence, investing in mental health care, and providing support for rural hospitals and small businesses.

“There is still a lot of work ahead, and the Oregon Senate Democrats will continue to respond and provide assistance and support to Oregonians throughout this public health emergency.”

House Bills 4204, 4212 and 4213 now go to the Governor for her signature. Senate Bill 1606 passed the Senate Floor this morning and later passed the House Chamber. It will also go to the Governor’s for final approval.

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