



MULTIFAMILY NW

The Association Promoting Quality Rental Housing

March 1, 2023

Oregon House Committee on Housing & Homelessness
900 Court. St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Concerns with HB 2754

Chair Dexter, members of the committee,

Multifamily NW is the largest association of housing providers in the state, with more than 1,000 members collectively managing more than 275,000 units throughout Oregon and southwest Washington. Our association advocates for common sense public policy with one goal in mind: Keeping Oregonians housed.

We believe that to do that, this Legislature must focus on providing permanent rent assistance to low-income Oregonians, ensuring that housing supply is aligned with our growing population, and creating a regulatory environment where housing providers can do what they do best – provide housing. Unfortunately, HB 2754 could make that difficult. While this bill is well-intended, we have some serious concerns about several components.

Our primary problem is that this bill has the potential to lead housing providers afoul of federal fair housing law. Housing providers are typically prohibited from soliciting any demographic information from renters, including age, for privacy and anti-discriminatory reasons.

Chapter 90 governs the entire rental process for all Oregonians, regardless of race, income, age and other factors. But this bill would establish a concerning legislative precedent by designating separate laws for Oregon renters based on their age. Beyond the fact that this could feasibly open the door to legal challenges, legislatively targeting specific demographic groups is arguably flawed public policy.

Aside from legal concerns, HB 2754 would also unfairly burden the housing provider to operate the property as if the affordable housing subsidy was still applicable. This punishes affordable housing providers for simply following the terms of their agreement with the subsidizing entity – and disincentivizes future providers, which will have serious ramifications on our state's supply of affordable housing. This Legislature ought to be focused on exploring ways to continue and expand housing subsidies, not making it more difficult for existing providers to maintain their units by instituting further rent control on certain types of housing.

In the unfortunate circumstance that a property should lose its affordable subsidy, ample notice to residents ought to occur well before the property's transition. While it's an unfortunate reality, subsidies for affordable housing are not designed in perpetuity. Renters and housing providers should both be well aware of a property's status and should prioritize transparency about any change in that status.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this bill. We look forward to working with this committee and state leadership to pass effective solutions to housing instability.

Sincerely,

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