

KHANH PHAM
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 46



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support for HB 3237

March 15, 2023

Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, State Representative for HD 46, representing outer Southeast Portland. I am honored to offer this written testimony in support of HB 3237, which allows local jurisdictions to set a cap on rental application screening charges.

According to Rent.com, the Lents neighborhood of Portland in my district is one of the “most affordable” in our city. The rule of thumb for housing affordability is that a family should spend no more than 30% of income on housing costs. With Portland’s minimum wage at \$16 an hour, this works out to a monthly rent of about \$825. A quick search of rental listings for a two bedroom apartment shows no options in that price range. The lowest priced listing is \$1,095 at [6833 SE Powell](#), with a “screening charge” of [\\$50](#) per person, to apply.

Phone calls and research by my office confirmed that in this “affordable” outer SE Portland market, \$50 application fees are the going rate. With a current deficit of 140,000 units statewide, this means that housing seekers can easily pay hundreds of dollars in fees trying to find an apartment in our extremely tight market, where there are often dozens of applicants for every listing.

Fees are set by landlords and property management companies at their discretion, and this practice is unregulated. I echo the tenants’ organizations who have submitted testimony for the record that urge your support for this bill, and also ask you to consider going beyond the piecemeal solution of allowing different rates by jurisdiction, and instead set a ceiling that creates a consistent industry standard that will support the most vulnerable in our communities.

Oregonians are counting on us to address the housing crisis now. Vermont and Massachusetts have already enacted a straight prohibition of rental application fees, which has been effective in improving access to housing, consumer protection, and reducing discrimination and segregation. It is time for Oregon to do the same.

As I’ve said before and will repeat again today, in a homelessness emergency, we must do everything possible to remove barriers to accessing housing.

I urge the committee to support HB 3237, which would allow cities and counties to set their own cap on application fees for rental properties, and to consider taking stronger steps to ensure fair access to housing for all Oregonians. Thank you!