



February 18, 2025

Chair Pam Marsh
House Housing and Homeless Committee
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jimmy Jones, and I am the Executive Director of the Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency in Salem, Oregon. We serve low-income residents of Marion, Polk and nine other counties across Oregon. Annually we provide more than \$77 million in services and direct client assistance for housing, homelessness, energy and weatherization, and early learning programs to more than 60,000 Oregonians in poverty, in addition to a range of emergency services that shelter the homeless and serve wildfire victims. I also serve as the Vice President for Legislative Affairs at the Community Action Partnership of Oregon, and sit on the Housing Committee of the Governor's Racial Justice Council.

I write today to support **House Bill 2967**, which would end a poor housing practice by banning application and screening fees. I have worked with homeless and housing insecure clients for a dozen years, and one of the most common and burdensome barriers to housing are background, screening, and general application fees.

Landlords have the right to screen backgrounds to housing. But they should pay for it themselves if they choose to do so. When you apply for a credit card at the bank, you generally do not pay a credit or screening fee. Why should you here? Both Massachusetts and Vermont have banned such application fees, and some states like New York and Wisconsin limit it to \$20 per application. Other states, like California and Washington and Colorado proscribe limits on how much prospective tenants can be charged. In years past, this was a more dubious practice than it is today. I have seen low-income and homeless persons applying for 10-20 apartments before they were accepted, having to pay application fees each time. The economic burden on low-income households seeking housing was significant historically. But even today we witness many errors in the system, with unreturned fees for homeless clients who were never screened.

Let's make it easier to get people into homes, and not allow crowdsourcing and outsourcing practices that are harmful to vulnerable renters across Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Jones".

Jimmy Jones
Executive Director