



March 14, 2023

To Chair Dexter, Vice-Chair Gamba and Helfrich, Members of the Committee:

My name is Caitlyn Kennedy Young, and I oversee the tenant education program, Rent Well, which is owned by Transition Projects. I am asking for your support of House Bill 2680. HB2680 would make changes to the laws related to tenant screening. With things such as Oregon's housing crisis, the COVID pandemic, and the devastation caused by the wildfires, we need innovative and diverse solutions to increase rental opportunities for individuals in need of housing.

As I said before, I oversee the Rent Well tenant education program. This program teaches tenants about their rights and responsibilities as renters. All too often, by the time an individual can get into a Rent Well class, it is after they have submitted many applications, only to receive denial after denial. Some of these individuals are nearly in tears when they tell us about how many times they've been denied housing and how few barriers to housing they actually have.

It is hard to hear no and it is even harder to pay over and over again while waiting for an undefined 'reasonable amount of time' only to hear no. Many of our students are shocked to find out about their rights around either being informed if their background has been run or getting their application fee returned. I, personally, have worked with participants before who waited upwards of three months to get their application fee back or be informed if they were screened at all. I am working with individuals that are homeless and don't have the luxury of waiting an undefined amount of time to hear a response.

After a very elementary Google search, many screening companies (RentSpree, Avail, Rentect, RentPrep, Yardi, and Hello Landing) advertise that they can get their screens back on average within a couple of hours to a day. Some boast as little as 60 seconds, and one was more conservative, saying for a "complex" tenant, it would take one week. As a person who pulls background reports on behalf of Rent Well students for educational purposes, the records search usually takes us 10-45 seconds to get back, after entering in very minimal information about the student. I think we can all agree that 14 days is a reasonable amount of time for a response.

HB2680 would clarify the timeframe for when a tenant would hear back with results, and provide applicants with the reassurance that their application was submitted, and if those are ignored, then there is an increase to the non-compliance fee. These are all much-needed reforms that would positively impact potential tenants immensely.

Your support is paramount to passing HB2680 to ensure that we can continue supporting Oregon tenants to improve their housing situations. Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caitlyn Kennedy Young".

Caitlyn Kennedy Young | Senior Manager of Landlord-Tenant Services