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RE: Support of HB 4125

Good morning Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Campos and Morgan, and members of the committee;

My name is Alli Sayre and I'm a tenant and the elected organizing coordinator for Portland Tenants United, the Portland city-wide tenant union. Through organizing, direct action, coalition building, and civic engagement, Portland Tenants United fights to keep people in their homes, and to achieve dignity and security for all tenants. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 4125, which would provide increased protection for tenants being charged screening fees and accountability for landlords who unlawfully retain said fees.

It's no secret that many tenants in Oregon struggle to find affordable housing. It is a problem that requires a multi-faceted solution, but HB 4125 is a smart and common-sense change that will help make things just a little easier for many Oregonians who live paycheck-to-paycheck. Tenants who have to apply to many properties will now have a higher likelihood of getting screening fees back for properties that are rented before their application is processed. And when they do inevitably encounter a greedy landlord who steals their application fee, they have a greater ability to be made whole. Plus, the increased fine will serve as a stronger deterrent to theft in the first place.

We wholly reject the assertion that this is not an urgent issue and the short session is not the time to address this. Tenants are struggling **now**. This is absolutely an emergency. Paying a handful of \$50 application fees might not be a big deal to a rapacious landlord who owns 10 properties, but it is absolutely a barrier to many tenants, who may have to choose between paying screening fees and buying food or medicine. If this isn't a big deal to the landlord lobby, why are they opposed to refunding screening fees? Seems to us like they are making a mountain out of a molehill here. If there's not a pressing concern affecting tenants as they say, surely they'd agree to just refund the fees now and we can work on the landlords' problems in the next session.

HB 4125 is a simple bill and the next step for the committee should be similarly simple: please vote **yes** to advance this bill.