

Re: Support for SB 599A

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing in strong support of SB 599A, to clarify that all Oregonians have access to fair housing, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status. The bill was amended in the Senate to address technical requests from stakeholders, and comes to the House with bi-partisan support. We urge this committee's support and swift passage, to ensure fair housing for all Oregonians.

This bill addresses an issue important to me personally and also to the community my organization serves. My name is Jensi Albright and I work at the Community Alliance of Tenants with many tenants who are immigrants and who are citizens and who are mixed status households. I myself have lived for more than a decade in a mixed status household with a partner who was in process towards becoming a green card holder and then a US citizen through our marriage and a stepson qualifying for DACA. In their experience, 15 years of being in immigration limbo came before that. We looked for housing together and were refused multiple times based on documentation. We had steady jobs and stellar references. Our landlord & property management had no business with our immigration documentation - it had no relevance to our tenancy. We worked with the Fair Housing Council trying to support other tenants in similar situations whose lack of US citizenship for each person in their household was preventing their housing stability. Not everyone knows these tenant protection agencies exist and their housing stability is vital.

State and federal fair housing laws already prohibit discrimination on the basis of national origin and on the basis of race. Because there is significant overlap between race, national origin, immigration and citizenship, it is considered best practice not to discriminate on the basis of immigration or citizenship, in recognition of the importance of compliance with fair housing laws. While many housing providers already adhere to best practices and do not discriminate on the basis of citizenship or immigration status, passage of the bill ensures that these principles are codified in our state statutes and sends a protective and inclusive message to our communities.

The bill is modeled after a provision in local ordinance in the City of Portland that has been in effect for years, and extends that protection statewide, ensuring consistency of protections across all communities. Four other states have similar statewide protections. (NY, WA, CA, IL)

This bill matters to my family and my community and to the community I work with every day. Immigration status has nothing to do with being a good tenant.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Jensi Albright
Community Alliance of Tenants