OREGON
WORKING FAMILIES PARTY

Testimony in Support of HB 3974
To: House Committee on Rules
From: Annie Naranjo-Rivera, Oregon Working Families Party

June 2nd, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Pham and Drazen, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Annie Naranjo-Rivera, and I serve as the State Director of the Oregon Working Families Party. We are a grassroots, multiracial, political organization made up of community-based organizations and unions who are committed to building a society that works for all of us, not just the wealthy and well-connected. We advocate for economic justice, racial equity, and a democracy that centers working people and their communities. I write today on behalf of the thousands of working people we represent across this state, in strong support of **House Bill 3974**.

HB 3974 is a critical step toward equity and fairness in Oregon's housing market. By capping residential applicant screening charges at $20 and allowing the use of third-party tenant screening reports, this bill addresses a quiet but persistent injustice in the rental process: the compounding financial burden placed on renters—especially low-income individuals and families of color—just to compete for a place to live.

Let's be honest, the current rental market is rigged against working people. Oregon families are facing a brutal combination of high rent, stagnant wages, and a statewide housing shortage. According to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, rents have climbed more than 40% in many parts of the

state over the past decade. Meanwhile, wages for working-class Oregonians have not kept pace—especially for service workers, caregivers, and educators, many of whom are barely keeping their heads above water. Add rising food, energy, and transportation costs, and it's no surprise that many families are spending over half their income on housing alone.

Now imagine a working parent or entry level worker trying to move—maybe due to a rent hike, eviction, or simply in search of a safer or more stable environment for their children. To apply for five or six rentals (not uncommon in competitive markets like Portland, Eugene, or Bend), they may have to pay $200 or more in screening fees—nonrefundable, often duplicative, and unaffordable for many.

This is not just an economic issue. It is a racial justice issue. Centuries of housing discrimination, redlining, and disinvestment have left communities of color with less generational wealth and fewer housing options. As a result, Black and Brown Oregonians are more likely to rent, more likely to move frequently, and more likely to experience housing insecurity. Excessive screening fees are a hidden tax on this instability—forcing tenants to pay again and again simply for the chance to compete in an unequal market. These are not fees for a roof over your head; these are fees just to try to get in the door for consideration.

HB 3974 offers a straightforward and powerful solution:

- Capping application fees at $20 creates a reasonable and uniform standard that protects tenants from excessive costs.
- Allowing third-party screening reports prevents renters from having to pay repeatedly for the same background checks, especially when they are applying for multiple units in a short time.

This bill rebalances the system so that renters—especially those with the least

financial flexibility—aren't nickel-and-dimed at a time when they're most vulnerable.

Every Oregonian deserves a fair shot at stable housing. That means ensuring the system for accessing housing is fair, transparent, and affordable. **HB 3974** reflects the values that define this state: equity, dignity, and opportunity for all.

On behalf of the Oregon Working Families Party, I urge you to pass **HB 3974** and stand with working families in this essential step toward housing justice.

Thank you for your leadership and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Annie Naranjo-Rivera
State Director
Oregon Working Families Party