



Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Seth Johnstone, I work at Basic Rights Oregon and I am in strong support of SB 599, to ensure that all Oregonians have access to fair housing, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

Basic Rights Oregon is an organization established in 1996 that fights for legal and lived equality for lgbtqia2s+ individuals. Housing is our community priority this session from the community engagement and surveys. The need to reduce barriers and increase protections through the housing screening process statewide was expressed as important to our immigrant community. Individuals who hold multiple marginalized identities like sexual orientation, gender identity, and immigration status, experience high rates of housing discrimination.

Every year, many flee from persecution that is directed at people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity ----because they are, or they are thought to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT), or because they support someone who is. Many seek safety in the United States, and face the daunting task of building new lives. It is estimated that 40 percent of young adults facing housing insecurity, which includes 18-23 years old- identify as LGBTQ+. Among adults, nearly 1 in 3 transgender people reported experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives.¹ Many end up in this space because of housing barriers.

It is important that statewide a landlord not reject an application as incomplete because an applicant does not produce a social security number if they are able to demonstrate identification in other approved ways. Passage of the bill ensures that non-discrimination principles are codified in our state statutes and sends a protective and inclusive message to our communities.

Four other states have similar statewide protections. (NY, WA, CA, IL). Its important to Basic Rights Oregon and our coalition partners that the Portland Ordinance (existing since 2019) is also made statewide practice, specifically that a landlord may not inquire about, or disclose with intent to harm, a tenant or applicant's immigration or citizenship status.

We urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

¹ Sandy E. James and others, "The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey" (Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality, 2016), available at http://www.transequality.org/sites/default/files/docs/usts/USTS_Full_Report_-_FINAL_1.6.17.pdf.