Submitter:                    Ken Thomas

On Behalf Of:

Committee:                 Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic:    SB722

Dear Senator Pham and Senators of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

My name is Ken Thomas and I live in Portland. I write to you in support of SB 722 which will stop landlords from using algorithmic services to collude to fix rent pricing.

I have moved 3 times in the past 4 years. Every time I look for a place to live I see many places all are priced exactly identically despite being from many different rental agencies. It feels obvious that they are all following a guideline they are seeing being set from some third party. If the cause of this is an AI driven model creating a standard for all to use, then we have high rents due to an unthinking and uncaring program, and that is unacceptable.

High rents continue to exacerbate the homelessness crisis affecting Portland and all of Oregon and are a burden on all Oregon tenants. One recent factor in raising rents is the use of third-party companies like RealPage, Yardi, and YieldStar to work together to fix rental prices. Anti-competitive practices make a housing market already failing to serve Oregonians even worse. These services allow landlords to skirt antitrust policies to create de facto cartels to drive up rent.

It is absolutely vital that bodies like this one, who are interested in housing all Oregonians, take action to end these practices among landlords in our state. This is the first step in stopping unfair, anti-competitive practices among landlords in the state. Hopefully more legislation will follow to create stronger enforcement mechanisms and go after other common malfeasance among landlords like tenant harassment, bad faith complaints, and non-adherence to minimum housing quality standards.

Sincerely,

Ken Thomas