



MULTIFAMILY NW

The Association Promoting Quality Rental Housing

May 3, 2023

Oregon Senate Committee on Housing & Development
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Concerns with HB 2680

Chair Jama, members of the committee,

Multifamily NW is the largest association of housing providers in the state, with more than 1,000 members collectively managing more than 275,000 units throughout Oregon and southwest Washington. Our association advocates for common sense public policy that expands access to quality rental housing for as many Oregonians as possible; a goal we know this Legislature shares.

Multifamily NW remains concerned about HB 2680 because it would make it more difficult for housing providers to get renters in units in an efficient manner. The application screening process is already governed by state and federal fair housing law – placing unnecessary mandates on the housing provider will disrupt the current process, of which housing providers are already compliant with.

Mandating a confirmation of screening with a receipt to the applicant is impractical for housing providers that process hundreds of thousands of applications on a regular basis. A receipt with a dollar amount could also lead to broad confusion about what a screening entails, likely not accounting for staff time and other costs that are associated with this process.

This bill has broader consequences that we encourage the committee to consider. For a wide array of legal reasons, many housing providers opt to contract with a third-party screening company that would also theoretically be tasked with complying with any new regulations.

Multifamily NW supports specifying Gender Identity as a protected class of unlawful discrimination, as it is a protection already granted by Oregon statutes and the Fair Housing Act. In that same vein, we are concerned with relegating duplicative authority to the Bureau of Labor and Industries for enforcement of these new provisions. Violations of fair housing law are the purview of the federal government, but this bill would vest that responsibility with an understaffed state agency.

Our association has additional concerns about the aggressive 30-day timeframe specified to return screening fees if the applicant withdraws the application in writing. A clearer definition of “in writing” must be further developed, as emails, texts, application portal platform messages, and even mailed letters could potentially qualify. Additionally, by increasing the penalty for noncompliance by hundreds of dollars per application, this bill places an undue burden on housing providers that runs counter to the goal of keeping Oregonians housed.

Multifamily NW appreciates the chance to continue the conversation about our concerns with this legislation as your committee considers it.

Thank you,

Gary Fisher
Deputy Executive Director
Multifamily NW

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Deborah Imse
deborah@multifamilynw.org

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Gary Fisher
gary@multifamilynw.org

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