



**February 25, 2020**

To Chair Holvey, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Smith Warner, Members of the Committee:

My name is Caitlyn Kennedy Young and I am asking for your support of Senate Bill 1533A, the amendment to 2017's HB2724 the rent guarantee program bill. I am asking for this support because I know that with Oregon's housing crisis we need innovative solutions and increasing the ability to provide an incentive to landlords that are willing to rent to individuals with housing barriers is one of those solutions.

I oversee the tenant education program, Rent Well, that is owned by Transition Projects. This program teaches tenants about their rights and responsibilities as renters. These are skills that are all to infrequently taught and yet constantly needed. Many tenants do the best they can with their limited knowledge regarding rental expectations yet many still have rental barriers on their background that prevent them from accessing future housing opportunities. Rent Well helps students learn what those barriers are, how to talk with landlords about what happened in the past, and how they have learned to be responsible tenants moving forward.

2017's HB2724 established the Rent Guarantee Program that is paired with educational programming like Rent Well. It allows graduates of Rent Well to go to potential future landlords and proudly say that because they are a graduate of Rent Well, their future landlord may be eligible to register for the rent guarantee. Meaning that if the tenant leaves the unit in the first year and there is any past owed debt from rent, damages, or legal fees the landlord can receive up to \$5,000 beyond the security deposit. This incentivizes a landlord to take a chance in renting to this graduate that they originally may not have.

When the bill was written there was concern about the overutilizing the guarantee pool and a lifetime limit per landlord of \$5,000 was set. A landlord could use this all on one tenant if needed or spread it out if needed. However, after two and a half years, of the 1,594 graduates of the program, only 3 landlords have requested a payout of the guarantee. The requests have all been thoroughly reviewed by the providers of this guarantee, deemed reasonable, and paid out. This fund has not been overutilized. But what this \$5,000 lifetime limit has done is make the second chance landlords that would usually accept our graduates regularly, limit their ability to support our graduates to one at a time to keep their risk low.

SB1533A would rewrite the \$5,000 lifetime limit from pre landlord to pre eligible tenant. This change would allow our landlord partners to feel comfortable accepting multiple graduates at the same time as well as ensure that all our graduates can confidently know that they are able to rent the place they want to be while still being protected with this fund. All while the fund payout requests would still being closely monitored and reviewed for any misuse or overutilization. There was some concern on the Senate floor that this change would mean that this funding source would be then need replenishing more frequently, however, this fund was a one-time ask in 2017 and would not be an on-going ask each biennium. I highly encourage your support to pass SB1533A and thus ensuring that we can continue to support Oregon tenants in need and want of improving their housing situation.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caitlyn Kennedy Young". The signature is written in a cursive style with a loop at the end of the last name.

**Caitlyn Kennedy Young** | Rent Well Program Administrator

Transition Projects

***from homelessness to housing***