

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Breese-Iverson, and members of the House Committee On Housing and Homelessness. Thank you for the opportunity to share with you, and I apologize for my technical difficulties and inability to share live with you today, February 5<sup>th</sup>.

My name is Stefani Barnett and I am a Principal Broker at REALTY EXECUTIVES Southern Oregon, located in my hometown of Grants Pass. I am testifying in **support of House Bill 2438**.

We all want to reduce barriers, especially in the housing market, and make things more fair for everyone. Unfortunately, under the current system by which the Oregon Association of Realtors maintains **monopolistic** power over the Multiple Listing Service database of homes for sale in the state of Oregon, real estate brokers, home sellers, and especially home buyers, all suffer, during this time of severe housing shortage in our state.

I am licensed as a principal broker by the Oregon Real Estate Agency. It is **unfair** to have a license earned and issued to me from the state but to be **excluded** from engaging in that business, as I am licensed to do, by being blocked from accessing the MLS unless I pay hundreds and hundreds of dollars each year to be a member of my industry association, the Oregon Association of Realtors.

I am also required to pay hundreds to join my regional Association of Realtors. In order to access the MLS I must pay to be part of BOTH of those associations.

Can you imagine a young single mom, or an immigrant, newly licensed as a real estate broker, just trying to earn a living, and being faced with the choice of paying these high membership fees or putting food on the table? In fact I personally spoke with a single, female real estate broker, just last week, whom was seeking assistance from career resource agencies in order to gather enough money to be able to pay these hefty required fees to gain access to the MLS and earn an income. She already has her license but can't work to access necessary info about listings without this database, the MLS.

Can you imagine how these membership fees limit the number of real estate professionals doing business in the state of Oregon, which results in a slow down of the whole home buying process, while we are already so constrained here in Oregon with our housing supply?

A simple solution, which by the way is the law in states as diverse as California, Florida, Georgia, and more, is that in these states, the real estate association is not allowed to have monopolistic power over the MLS. For example, in California, courts have determined that the state's antitrust laws prohibit MLSs from restricting access solely to real estate professionals.

This means that MLSs cannot mandate that members be part of a Realtor association to gain access. Instead, real estate professionals in these states pay a reasonable fee to access the MLS. I want the same option for real estate professionals in Oregon.

If we don't pass House Bill 2438, we risk a shortage of real estate professionals doing business in Oregon, a slowdown in the home buying process, and the possibility of an antitrust lawsuit.

Thank you for your time today, and please consider a **YES vote on House Bill 2438** to reduce barriers, improve access, and help make Oregon's real estate business fair for all.