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March 4, 2025

Re: Support for prohibiting discrimination in housing access (SB 599)

Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

On behalf of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS), we are pleased to submit testimony in support of SB 599 to ensure that all Oregonians can access fair housing, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.

The mission of Clackamas Women's Services (CWS) is to break the isolation of domestic and sexual violence. CWS is a community-based organization providing comprehensive, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic/dating violence, sexual assault, elder abuse, human trafficking, and stalking. The people we serve come from both rural and urban communities. Annually, we provide over 11,000 nights of shelter, 26% of the people we serve identify as Latinx, 9% are immigrants, and 15% have Limited English Proficiency.

In our experience, most housing providers already adhere to best practices and do not discriminate on the basis of citizenship or immigration status, the passage of the bill ensures that these principles are codified in our state statutes and sends a protective and inclusive message to our communities.

Housing is the top need for people who are fleeing domestic and sexual violence, trafficking, and elder abuse. Survivors often face episodes of homelessness due to violence, safety issues, and/or isolation caused by the abuser. They often have few or no resources available when they are fleeing. Lack of culturally specific resources, discrimination, and many other barriers (fear of deportation, lack of language access, etc.) can leave Latinx survivors at even greater risk of violence and abuse.

A recent [investigative report](#) found that of 150 people surveyed around the Pacific Northwest, 67% said domestic violence caused homelessness at some point in their lives, and 49% said it caused their current situation.

The bill is modeled after a provision in [local ordinance](#) in the City of Portland that has been in effect for years. It extends that protection statewide, ensuring consistency of protections across all communities. Four other states have similar statewide protections (NY, WA, CA, IL).

The bill will amend the Landlord-Tenant Act to provide that:

1. A Landlord may not inquire about, or disclose with intent to harm, a tenant or applicant's immigration or citizenship status;
2. A Landlord must accept any of the following, or a combination thereof, to verify the name, date of birth and photo of the Applicant:

- a. Evidence of Social Security Number (SSN Card);
 - b. Valid Permanent Resident Alien Registration Receipt Card;
 - c. Immigrant Visa;
 - d. Individual Tax Payer Identification Number (ITIN);
 - e. Non-immigrant visa;
 - f. Any government-issued identification regardless of expiration date; or
 - g. Any non-governmental identification or combination of identifications that would permit a reasonable verification of identity.
3. A Landlord may not discriminate against a tenant or applicant based on immigration or citizenship status.
 4. The bill would not apply to landlord compliance with federally subsidized housing benefit eligibility screening requirements.

***Note that technical amendments are pending to the bill to ensure that the language accomplishes the above intent.*

We must prohibit discrimination on the basis of immigration status as it would cause immeasurable harm to survivors of domestic and sexual violence who already have significant barriers to overcome to find the safety and well-being they deserve.

For the above reasons, we urge you to pass SB 599 to protect survivors of domestic and sexual violence from housing discrimination and further harm from abuse. Thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Erlbaum', written in a cursive style.

Melissa Erlbaum
Executive Director