

Submitter: Ilene Vargas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB599

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Ilene Vargas, and I am writing in strong support of Senate Bill 599, which seeks to prohibit discrimination based on immigration status in real estate transactions. This bill is a crucial step toward ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have fair and equal access to housing in Oregon.

Housing is a basic human need, yet too many individuals face unjust barriers due to their immigration status. I have seen firsthand how families are denied housing opportunities and forced into unstable living conditions simply because of their background. Discrimination in housing exacerbates homelessness, economic insecurity, and community instability — issues that affect us all.

Beyond the immediate harm of housing discrimination, denying individuals and families a stable home can also make it more difficult for them to adjust their legal status. Many immigration processes require proof of stable residence and community ties. If families are repeatedly displaced due to discrimination, they may struggle to provide the necessary documentation, further limiting their opportunities to gain legal status and fully contribute to their communities.

If you consider this bill from a purely legal standpoint, there is a clear need for accountability, not exclusion. Fair and just legal systems provide individuals with a way to address and correct violations rather than punishing them without recourse. For example:

- The law allows individuals who receive a speeding ticket to take responsibility for their actions—whether by paying a fine or attending traffic court—without stripping them of their rights or dignity.
- All laws should function similarly, offering individuals a process to rectify their status rather than forcing them into the shadows or denying them basic rights like housing. These rights must be legally protected from discrimination by landlords and others in positions of power.

Just as a speeding violation does not define a person's legality or humanity, neither should immigration status. Fairness under the law means ensuring that all individuals—regardless of their background—have the opportunity to address legal challenges and contribute to society. By passing SB 599, Oregon can take a critical

step toward ensuring that everyone has the stability and dignity they need to thrive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ilene Vargas