

Submitter: Randy Lucas
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB599
Re: Support for SB 599A

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to support SB 599A, to clarify that all Oregonians have access to fair housing, regardless of their immigration or citizenship status. The bill was amended in the Senate to address technical requests from stakeholders, and comes to the House with bi-partisan support. We urge this committee's support and swift passage, to ensure fair housing for all Oregonians.

As a long time advocate and former Housing Specialist for refugees and immigrants, I fully support SB 599A. We need to remove barriers toward safe and secure housing for all Oregonians. Much of the testimony in opposition to this bill focuses on hypotheticals - the "what ifs", based on discriminatory beliefs about culturally or ethnically different people without recognizing that every single one of those "what ifs" can happen whether the tenant is a legal resident or not. In my previous work, I have had landlords tell me they would not rent to people from other cultures, or who don't speak English because it posed too many challenges for them. We don't need to give landlords loopholes to get out of their responsibilities.

State and federal fair housing laws already prohibit discrimination on the basis of national origin and on the basis of race. Because there is significant overlap between race, national origin, immigration and citizenship, it is considered best practice not to discriminate on the basis of immigration or citizenship, in recognition of the importance of compliance with fair housing laws. While many housing providers already adhere to best practices and do not discriminate on the basis of citizenship or immigration status, passage of the bill ensures that these principles are codified in our state statutes and sends a protective and inclusive message to our communities.

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

For all of these reasons, I urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,

Randy Lucas