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We believe that everyone deserves to live a life free from violence.

April 23, 2025

Re: Support for SB 599A

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

I am writing in strong support of 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.

I am the executive director of Raphael House of Portland, which has been providing safety and support services for survivors of domestic violence, including children, since 1977. Besides providing a confidential emergency shelter for these families we have many wrap around services, including supporting survivors as they navigate the challenges they face after leaving an abusive relationship and establishing a new safe and stable home. A large percentage of the survivors we are helping are immigrants and are working towards citizenship. Many have had their abusers hold their citizenship status as a leverage of control and abuse. We help many through the process of T-Visas and U Visas as they are victims of trafficking and/or domestic or sexual violence.

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.

Survivors of domestic and sexual violence have enough hurdles to overcome after fleeing an abusive person. Agencies like Raphael House can help them through the process of moving into a life free from violence and all survivors in Oregon deserve that chance.

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

Sincerely,

Emmy Ritter, MSW
Executive Director
Raphael House of Portland