

To: House Committee on Rules  
Re: Support of HB 3974

June 2, 2025

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Pham and Drazen, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Iris Hodge, and I have had the great opportunity for more than a decade to advocate at the federal, state and local levels for a wide variety of Oregonians. From low-wage workers, to domestic violence survivors and small business owners throughout Oregon. Today I'm writing in strong support of HB 3974, a commonsense and urgently needed measure to cap rental application fees and allow the use of third-party screening reports.

I've spent countless hours sitting across tables in shelters, community centers, and businesses, listening to people trying to make a life for themselves and their families. When it comes to renting there is one issue that too often flies under the radar, it is the cost of *applying* for housing. It's an invisible obstacle, and it hits the most vulnerable the hardest.

When someone is living paycheck to paycheck, every dollar matters. In today's competitive rental market, application fees can add up quickly making finding a home out of reach for many. This may force an individual to remain in an unsafe environment for themselves or their children.

I've worked with people who've spent more on applications than they do on groceries in a week. People who can't afford to apply again after being rejected once. People who never get to the front of the line because they've run out of money just trying to prove they're eligible.

Let's be clear: this is not about risk for landlords. This is about survival for tenants. HB 3974 would put a \$20 cap on screening fees and allow renters to reuse a valid third-party screening report—just like you can reuse a credit report to shop for loans. It's simple, fair, and long overdue.

I've worked with small business owners, too—people who want to retain employees but can't because workers have to move out of town to find stable housing. The loss of one employee in a shop with just three or four employees can mean the difference between staying open and having to shut your doors. The ripple effects of housing instability are enormous: on productivity, on family stability, on healthcare costs, and on the long-term economic health of our state.

This bill may fix the housing crisis with one magic button, but it will make the system *more humane*. It will give people a fighting chance. It will keep a parent from choosing between rent applications and their kid's medication. It will reduce the trauma of repeated rejection and exploitation.

And it will tell working people and marginalized communities that their dignity matters.

HB 3974 is practical legislation with real, measurable impact. Let's lead with compassion and common sense on this issue. As someone who has worked alongside people navigating this broken system, I urge you: pass this bill.

Thank you for your time, and for your continued commitment to supporting small businesses and making Oregon a place where everyone—regardless of income, housing status, or background—has a fair shot.

Sincerely,

Iris Hodge

Oregon Working Families Party

State Committee Member