

Representative Tomei –

I'm writing today to urge you to support HB 2639. Adding "rental assistance" to the types of prohibited discrimination will help to open the door to thousands of tenants seeking stable housing. At Northwest Housing Alternatives we often work with families struggling to use rent assistance, and the first barrier they face is landlords unwilling to even accept their application. HB 2639 would give them the opportunity to present their application and be screened on their merits. We know that families succeed when they can find housing close to work or school, near family or church, in walk-able neighborhoods or with good transit. When their choices are limited, the likelihood of stability is diminished.

Northwest Housing Alternatives is a landlord that would be subject to the requirements of this bill and we welcome the change. We accept Section 8 and other rent assistance at all of our 1,986 units in 17 Oregon counties. With more than 25 years of experience with the program, we know that *having Sec 8 helps tenants succeed in their housing and helps us succeed as a housing provider.*

Another very important part of the bill is the Stable Rental Housing Program that would provide modest amounts of rental assistance to prevent homelessness before it begins or shorten the length of homelessness and return families to stable housing. Northwest Housing Alternatives' HomeBase program uses this same model and serves 150-200 households each year but limitations on our funding mean that *we turn away eight households for every one that we can serve.* The Stable Rental Housing Program can be an important new funding source to increase the number of families served in Clackamas County. When families come to the Annie Ross House shelter it costs more than \$10,000 per household to serve them, they have accumulated debts and barriers to housing, and experienced trauma that ripples through many state-funded systems. *When we can prevent their homelessness at an average of \$3,000 for financial assistance and case management, we have made a wise investment--this is what the Stable Rental Housing Program offers.*

Thank you for your support of HB 2639.

Martha McLennan

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