



April 15, 2019

Co-Chairs Beyer, McKeown, and Members of the Joint Committee on Transportation:

I am writing on behalf of the Community Alliance of Tenants to express our strong and unbending support of HB 2015, the Equal Access to Roads Act.

My name is Pam Phan and I am the Policy and Organizing Director of the Community Alliance of Tenants. CAT is Oregon's only statewide tenant-led organization, with more than 5000 members throughout Oregon. In addition to creating opportunities to influence public decisions that impact their lives, CAT also operates a statewide Renters Rights Hotline, currently servicing more than 2500 callers a year to support mainly low-income renters as they navigate a hostile rental market. Our members and leaders are predominantly people of color, low-wage workers, families with children, people living with disabilities, seniors, and immigrants and refugees. CAT is building a strong housing justice movement that is led and directed by: low-income renters, who are most impacted by Oregon's historic lack of access to housing and the current housing crisis.

The ability to drive legally is an essential and everyday need for many Oregon families as people take their kids to school, commute to work, and care for family and neighbors in need. However, current law creates barriers to obtaining a license for many Oregonians due to the documentation requirements. The most impacted communities include Oregon's undocumented population, seniors, homeless/houseless folks, domestic violence victims, and other Oregonians who have difficulty accessing their birth certificate and other paperwork necessary to prove their citizenship status.

Furthermore, if an immigrant without legal status is pulled over and is driving without a license, they can be arrested and put on a pathway to deportation—even if they have no other criminal record and have lived here for years.

Driver's licenses also play a critical role when applying for housing. Many landlords will not accept other forms of identification that are already allowable by state and federal Fair Housing law, and will only accept a state issued driver's license. In many cases, people without this official form of identification are forced to rely on the kindness of friends and family - resorting to couchsurfing and often are unable to get or stay housed. It is becoming clear, in every corner of our state, the cascading effects that houselessness has on our communities at large, not just those with the least access to it.

Between 80,000-100,000 Oregon residents could benefit from driver license expansion. The ability to apply for a license to drive gives all Oregonians, including those without legal status, the opportunity to follow the law, get to work and school safely, and provide for their families and stay in their homes.

This is a key issue for a significant portion of our members who rely on identification to access the basic services that we all should have access to. Renters in Oregon strongly urge your support for House Bill 2015 to ensure that all Oregonians pass a driver's license test, provide proof of identity, and proof of insurance can apply for a license.

Sincerely,

Pamela N. Phan
Policy and Organizing Director
Community Alliance of Tenants