

Chair Fahey, vice chairs Campos and Morgan and members of the Committee. Thank you for the time to talk to you about HB 2736. For the record my name is Michael Fieldman, I live in Roseburg and I am the Legislative Assistant for Rep Leif. I came to my position with Rep. Leif after retiring from a 40 year career working in a broad array of human service programs and have a certain degree of preexisting knowledge in the housing arena.

The impetus for this legislation came out of a constituent call where she felt she had been sexually harassed by an employee of the landlord. She did report it to the landlord who ultimately decided her claims were unfounded. She was obviously not satisfied with that resolution and reached out to us for other options she could pursue. I reached out to the landlord to understand why the determination was made that the claim was unfounded and was told that in part it was because their employee wasn't that type of person and was a good church person.

Given that she was living in HUD funded housing I asked the landlord for their policies regarding sexual harassment and was referred to the HUD Federal Regulations dealing with fair housing and discrimination for the formal complaint processes. These federal regulations were not only very cumbersome to understand but also did not specifically mention sexual harassment as an issue it covered. In doing research as to her options, other than going to Legal Aide and taking legal action, it was difficult to identify what else she could do. And if it was that difficult for me, with my years of experience, to find information then I can only imagine what it would be like for a typical tenant, let alone someone with limited reading abilities or someone whose native language is not English. Ultimately, we realized there was no easy way for someone to find out what their rights and resolution options were.

It became clear to us a single source document that provided this information was needed.

The concept for this legislation is similar to the employment notices we are all familiar with that are in office break rooms that detail employment rights and what to do if you think your rights have been violated. It is purely an informational document that would be provided at lease up. Additionally, it could become a useful tool for housing advocates and casemanagers, when educating people on their housing rights. In conversations with BOLI staff they thought this was a document that they could readily develop and fits in their wheelhouse. Our expectation is that they would work with outside organizations, such as the Oregon Law Center, in developing the document to assure it is in a language and presentation format that is readily understandable to the intended reader.

We see this document filling a void in the information that is available to the typical renter. It is often said that knowledge is power and this is an effort to empower individuals to be able to know how to respond, on their own, to situations like our constituent experienced. We think it is a viable and workable solution and therefore ask for your passage of this bill out of committee.

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