

APRIL 1, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and members of the committee:

My name is Maeve O'Connell and I'm asking for your support of House Bill 3306.

I was born, raised and currently work in Eugene, Oregon. Last summer, I moved just west of Eugene to Veneta to live with my fiancé, his brother and his brother's partner, their two dogs and our combined four cats. Before living in Veneta, I moved into my fiancé's duplex in Springfield, where he was already an established renter. Before that I lived with a family friend in Bend, and before that I was living in Seattle with my cousin.

I wanted to share with you today a little bit about my housing journey because it demonstrates a situation that too many Oregonians are in: living with friends or family, because we need an affordable and safe place to call home and we know that our family members won't charge us the outrageous move-in costs that we would find other places – like application fees, background check fees, first and last month's rent, and especially security deposits.

Security deposit requirements in Oregon have built massive financial barriers into the process of renting, even though rentals are supposed to be designed for people like me, who can't afford to purchase a home of our own.

The cost prohibitive nature of even starting a rental lease on my own is one of the reasons I've found myself avoiding it for so long – even working full time in a good job and having good credit, I cannot put down hundreds or thousands of dollars towards a security deposit on a new place, if I'm already having to shovel out money for all of those other move-in costs.

This is why I like “deposit waiver fees” and know it would be a big help. We heard earlier testimony showing that, if given the choice, almost everyone – 92% of renters – will opt for paying small deposit waiver fees instead of a one-time large security deposit. It's an option that benefits everyone: landlords can purchase lease insurance with deposit waiver fees so they have a safety net to pay for damages or unpaid rent, and tenants like me can sign a lease and access a rental of my own.

If I were able to choose the option to pay a small, monthly fee instead of a massive, one-time security deposit, my fiancé and I would branch out on our own sooner than we'll be able to do now, under the current system. I hope you'll pass House Bill 3306 to ensure the legality of and consumer protections for these deposit alternatives, knowing that you'll be helping countless Oregonians like myself get one step closer to living in a place of our own – without roommates, each other's pets who don't always get along, or unaffordable security deposits.

Thank you,

Maeve O'Connell