



March 31, 2021

To Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, Members of the Committee:

My name is Caitlyn Kennedy Young, and I oversee the tenant education program, Rent Well, which is owned by Transition Projects. I am asking for your support of Senate Bill 852. SB852 would reform the mortgage interest deduction process within the state. Even a modest change to how the mortgage interest deduction is currently run would allow for more than a hundred million each biennium to be reinvested into increasing opportunities for individuals struggling to find and maintain housing across the state. We need innovative and diverse solutions to increase opportunities for struggling individuals, especially since Covid and the wildfires hit our state.

As I said before, I oversee the Rent Well tenant education program, overseen by Transition Projects. Transition Projects is a Portland-based agency with a mission to help individuals transitioning from homelessness into housing. We are committed to ensuring that everybody has access to safe, affordable homes. Each year we assist more than 10,000 people experiencing homelessness with services ranging from basic needs to shelter, housing assistance, wellness services, veteran-specific services, income development, and so much more. We've placed more than 1,000 individuals into affordable housing on any given year and supported them in retaining that housing. With the passage of SB852, we would be able to significantly increase the services that we provide for our community as well as develop robust support services for those individuals so they can continue to thrive in their new homes.

Our current mortgage interest deduction is one of the primary structural reasons why the wealth disparities are getting worse. 60% of the subsidy currently goes to the wealthiest 5th of Oregonians. Most low-income and middle-income homeowners don't benefit from this deduction. Renters are currently excluded from receiving any benefits from the subsidy. The current deduction process also, not surprisingly, intensifies racial wealth disparities that have been built up over generations. After the year that we have been through, we must ensure that Oregonians who have been impacted the most by racial injustices and income inequality are uplifted. The two changes that SB852 adds to the current mortgage interest deduction process would be ensuring that individuals do not receive deductions on their vacation homes and that the deduction rate would slowly decrease for those making more than 200K per year. Anyone above 250K per year would not receive this deduction.

I am asking for your support of SB852, thus ensuring that we can continue supporting Oregonians in improving their housing situations. Thank you so much for your time and consideration on this matter.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Caitlyn Kennedy Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caitlyn Kennedy Young | Rent Well Program Administrator
Transition Projects

from homelessness to housing