

Chair Fahey and members of the committee-

My name is Norton Cabell and I live in Eugene. I chair the Intergovernmental Housing Policy Board, a joint creation of Lane County and the City of Eugene that was formed over 25 years ago. Our mission is to increase the availability of decent, affordable housing for low and very low income families and individuals. We do that by making policy recommendations to the jurisdictions.

Because of the extremely tight housing market in Eugene, the City Council asked us a year ago to look at ways to enhance protections for tenants. We created a committee—composed mostly of landlords and tenants—to look at various aspects of the landlord/tenant relationship to work on that. One area of special concern to tenants is the application screening process, because it is time-consuming and expensive—and frustrating—for tenants.

We spent one meeting talking about the “one app” idea, which would streamline the application process for tenants. We heard directly from landlords and from screening companies, both of which were opposed to the idea; they are comfortable with the present system and see some expense and no benefit from doing things differently. Their objections were mostly process oriented. But it became clear that it would be difficult to adopt something as challenging as a “one app” rule at the local level for—yes—procedural reasons.

Let me be clear: I am testifying in my personal capacity, not representing the Housing Policy Board. And full disclosure: I am a landlord. But I am writing to urge you to support HB 2427. What cannot be accomplished at the local level can be at the state level. For me, the most important part of this bill is Section 5, creating an advisory committee. I heard both landlords and screening companies say, “It can’t be done because...” followed by a list of technical and procedural reasons. I understand that Fair Housing and the Fair Credit Reporting requirements are a legitimate concern, but adopting this bill will bring the parties to the table to look for ways to overcome the hurdles.

Again, I urge you to support HB 2427.