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February 23rd, 2021

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Campos and Morgan, and Members of the House Committee on Housing,

We are Next Up Action Fund, formerly known as the Bus Project, our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for diverse young people, our work and our communities are greatly impacted by barriers to language access and the ways it impacts housing. We strongly support HB 2761 which will publish on the secretary's website a list of five most commonly spoken languages in each county, other than English.

Today I want to highlight the Importance of accessible information especially as it relates to housing and basic needs. Language is a major barrier to people being able to find housing. Having information in people's language can be the difference between being able to secure and maintaining housing or not.

When most agency websites are not available in languages other than english, it falls on community organizations and members to fill that gap and make sure resources, like housing, are accessible. This works to shift the responsibilities away from landlords and instead to community-based organizations for guidance and translation services. The step of seeking translation services burdens renters and acts as an additional barrier to securing housing.

This bill is an important step towards addressing the housing and opportunity gaps created by barriers to language access, but we also believe that this is just the first step in making our current systems more accessible. The top five languages should also be provided used in all materials - including election-related materials, like ballots. Supporting HB 2761 is a practical step to continue expanding accessible housing to all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time,
Devin Ruiz
Community Engagement Organizer, Next Up Action Fund