



Date: February 2nd, 2022
To: House Committee On Housing
From: Crystalyn Black, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: Provides Tenants with Relief from Paying Multiple Screening Fees 2022, HB 4125

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chair Campos, Vice-Chair Morgan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Crystalyn Black, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 4125. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

Oregon's housing market has become unaffordable in the past 10 years. The few affordable options that exist, are dwindling so securing safe, affordable, and accommodating housing, has become increasingly difficult during the pandemic. As a result, applicants must apply for multiple units, spending upwards of \$200 (e.g., four application fees at \$50 each) on applications, in the hopes of increasing their opportunity of successfully acquiring a home. Rental applications fees can be expensive for larger households and be a barrier for households with a low income. For many in our communities, the high cost, compounded with the competitiveness of the housing market, forces many in our communities to make difficult financial decisions, and could mean the difference between being able to feed one's family or stable housing. Under the current law, landlords are required to return the fee if the application was not processed or if the unit is filled before the application was reviewed. However, applicants are not always notified regarding the status of their application, their background check, or the rental availability. House Bill 4125 provides clarity and guidance with respect to management of rental fees and increases the penalties for violating this law. The Urban League urges this body to act on this issue.

With House Bill 4125, landlords would be required to notify applicants when charging an application fee, as well as why and when the fee should be returned. This bill would specify the timeframe as 14 days or up to 60 days if the applicant is being considered for multiple units. Additionally, the landlord will confirm with the applicant that their background check was completed. The penalty for violating this provision would increase from \$150 to \$250. The language around fee return currently states "within a reasonable amount of time" which can be interpreted broadly. By clarifying this language, landlords will have a better understanding of how to comply with the law.



Urban League
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This bill has no fiscal impact and implementing these changes can lead to a rental search process that is transparent and equitable. Oregonians are looking for protection surrounding the rental process. Passing this bill is a step in that direction and we urge you to pass House Bill 4125.

Respectfully,

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