



March 14, 2023

Chair Dexter, Vice Chair Gamba, Vice Chair Helfrich, and Members of the Committee on Housing and Homelessness

Re: House Bill 2680 – Support, Rental Screening Fees

Chair Dexter, Vice Chair Gamba, Vice Chair Helfrich, and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Creeana Bort, I am a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Reservation, and I represent the NAYA Action Fund located in Portland, OR. Founded by the community, for the community, the NAYA Action Fund is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization with a mission to expand political advocacy and build electoral power in partnership with the Native community. The NAYA Action Fund provides tools to shape public policy, cultivate leadership, and elect's champions for issues impacting Native people. Our vision of systemic change is youth-centered, family-driven, and elder guided. I write in support of House Bill 2680.

House Bill 2680 would require landlords to refund screening fees within 14-days if the landlord fills the unit prior to screening the applicant. Prospective tenants who are looking for a home often need to submit several applications for rental units in the hopes of being approved for a place to call home. Unregulated application fees have been a barrier to housing and financial stability for tenants across the state of Oregon, with some fees as high as \$75 per application per adult. Despite paying these fees, applicants can still be turned down. According to the 2021 State of Housing Report, we know that African Americans, Hawaiian-Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans make up the majority of renter households within the Portland region. It's no secret that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community members experience housing disparities at a higher rate than their white counterparts. These factors make obtaining a home, including renting one, more difficult for communities battling discrimination within the system.

Prospective tenants frequently pay the application fee without ever hearing about the status of their application or if their background check was even conducted, leaving them unaware about their housing status. HB 2680 identifies much-needed changes to applicant screening laws which will help renters and landlords navigate requirements for accepting application fees, returning those fees promptly when the application is not processed, and provide clear information to applicants about their rights.

On behalf of the NAYA Action Fund, we request your support of HB 2680, for the housing stabilization, transparency, and financial attunement of all renters in Oregon.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Creeana Bort'.

Creeana Bort
Policy and Advocacy Organizer