

Re: Support for SB 1523

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Judy Annin, and I am writing urging support of SB 1523. This bill helps bridge the digital divide and removes electronic barriers that can prevent people from accessing and keeping housing.

As a **manufactured homeowner in a 55+ community**, I regularly see neighbors who have never had the need or opportunity to use computers at work or at home. Many of my neighbors are over age 75 and were homemakers, service workers, or retired before computers became common in the workplace, so they never had the chance to become comfortable using them.

As **Co-Chair of the Homeowners Association** at Twin Cedars, most of our communication is shared through printed newsletters, posted notices, and community meetings. Of more than 100 homeowners in our park, fewer than 30% use or have access to a computer.

As a **Board member of OSTA**, I see this more broadly. Nearly half of our members still pay by check instead of using online payment systems.

Even basic technology can be a barrier. Our clubhouse requires a passcode to enter, and many seniors find the keypad confusing. If access required a smartphone, many residents would be unable to use the facility. A large number do not own smartphones and learning new technology at age 75 or older can be **overwhelming and intimidating**. These barriers limit participation in social activities that are important for healthy aging and community connection.

The digital divide is not just about internet access. It is also about making sure people who are not familiar with smartphones or electronic portals can still meet basic needs like housing. **We must ensure that technology does not leave people behind.**

Basic housing protections in the digital age should include:

- The option to pay rent by check or another reasonable method
- The option to apply for housing using a paper application
- The option to use a non-digital key or entry method for essential facilities

These are simple, low-cost tools that landlords already use. SB 1523 puts these common-sense protections into law by requiring:

The option to pay by check or another reasonable method. Tenants should not be forced to use electronic payment portals. These systems can be confusing, may charge extra fees, can fail at critical times, and simple mistakes can put someone's housing at risk.

The option of a paper application. Online applications can be very difficult without reliable internet or when using only a phone. Keeping paper applications available ensures everyone has a fair chance to apply for housing.

The option of a non-digital key for essential facilities. App-based entry systems require an up-to-date smartphone, which many people do not have. Tenants should be able to use a physical key, key fob, or keypad to access places like laundry rooms, parking areas, trash and recycling, and other facilities included in their rental agreement. Similar protections already exist for entry to a housing unit; they should apply to these spaces as well.

Research shows that about one in ten people does not have a smartphone, and that number is even higher for seniors, like me.

These practical, budget-neutral solutions will especially help seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income renters, groups that face higher risks of housing instability and homelessness. SB 1523 simply preserves fair access to housing by keeping existing options available.

For all of these reasons, I urge your strong support of SB 1523. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,