



MULTIFAMILY NW
The Association Promoting Quality Rental Housing

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Opposition to SB 1523

February 3, 2026

Good afternoon Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development.

For the record my name is Jonathan Clay, Government & Public Affairs Manager with Multifamily NW. We are the largest association of housing providers in Oregon, representing nearly 300,000 rental homes and the professionals who own, operate, and maintain them. Our members are committed to providing stable housing while navigating an increasingly complex regulatory environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1523. We really appreciate the intent of this bill. We too want seniors and others who need housing to be placed as quickly and easily as possible. We appreciate the opportunity to have had initial conversations with Northwest Pilot Project, we hope to continue to have these conversations and we are hopeful that we can meet the goals of all involved.

While there are several elements we could support, we have concerns with section 2, subsections A through J, related to the rental application process. These provisions do not provide greater access, speed or efficiency for applicants. We believe they risk undermining long-standing Fair Housing practices that already require housing providers to recognize and reasonably accommodate applicants' needs. This is done through a system that has been in place for more than 35 years and allows for people with challenges (or disabilities) you have heard today to be given reasonable accommodations like a paper application - this is required through The Fair Housing Act.

We are concerned about risk in not having equal opportunity for those needing housing due to delays in delivering paper applications and having too many paper applications that need to be processed. You would simply be moving the workload from one group to another. Either the housing advocate inputs the information into the portal or the housing provider has to do it.

Talking with the bill proponents, we have heard how software systems utilized have glitches that need to be fixed. For instance, if a housing advocate submits multiple applications on behalf of potential tenants using the same phone number on each application, the system will flag those applications as potentially fraudulent. Multifamily NW is committed to working with our members to address and fix these issues so housing advocates can better serve their clients and help applicants secure housing as quickly as possible.

Our housing providers work to accommodate a wide range of resident needs. SB 1523 would take us back and away from what we have worked so hard to provide to those needing housing - by restricting providers' ability to standardize basic operational tools that improve accuracy, reduce errors, and support timely communication. These tools are critical for maintenance requests, safety communications, payment tracking, and compliance with existing landlord-tenant law.

Ensuring advocates can assist their clients to complete the standard electronic application is a better outcome for applicants, as it gives them the strongest opportunity to be ranked competitively when applications are reviewed. Paper applications, by comparison, have inherent processing limitations compared to electronic submissions.

We are currently required by the city of Portland, and it's become standard practice to approve the first applicant that qualifies. For these reasons and those stated above, we hope to be given the opportunity to continue working with Northwest Pilot Project and other stakeholders to come up with solutions and better alternatives.

While we have concerns about the tenant portal and paper applications, we could support other elements of SB 1523 that promote equity, including provisions ensuring access to building amenities without reliance on mobile devices and allowing tenants to pay rent by check. However, it is also necessary to ensure current best practices that housing providers may require payment via secured funds, such as a cashier's check or money order, when a renter has a history of sending dishonored checks, as well as not being required to accept cash payments.

Unfortunately, until more conversations can occur with Northwest Pilot Project and other stakeholders, we oppose the bill as written today. We look forward to continuing to work toward a solution that provides a solid path for those who need housing.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Clay
Government & Public Affairs Manager
Multifamily NW