



Sybil Hebb
Director of Legislative Advocacy
621 SW Morrison, Suite 1450
Portland, OR 97205
P: 503.936.8959
shebb@oregonlawcenter.org

**House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Testimony in Support of SB 1523A
February 19th, 2026**

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Andersen, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Law Center, thank you for the opportunity to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 1523A, which is designed to bridge the digital divide for tenants and remove barriers to housing. We appreciate the input of stakeholders that led to the A-engrossed version of the bill, and are glad this version resolved any known opposition.

OLC's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. Helping families maintain safe, stable housing is a critical part of our work. SB 1523A will help remove barriers to housing stability and promote fairness, accessibility, and equity in housing for all Oregonians.

Currently in Oregon, there are no prohibitions on requiring tenants to use electronic portals or smartphone apps to make rent payments, submit housing applications, or access facilities like common spaces or laundry areas. Increasingly, many landlords are opting to use these digital tools. For many tenants, this may be a welcome convenience, but for others, digital access tools are a significant burden. SB 1523A would not ban use of these tools, but would ensure that tenants continue to have non-digital alternative options.

Pew Research [indicates](#) that one in ten people does not have a smartphone, and the gap is much wider for seniors—one in four people over age 65 lacks a smartphone. Digital-only systems disproportionately harm:

- Seniors
- People with disabilities
- Low-income renters

These are also the renters at highest risk of housing instability and homelessness. SB 1523A is a budget-neutral and effective way to ease access for vulnerable tenants without burdening landlords.

Key aspects of the bill:

- Requires landlords to provide a printable application and process non-portal applications;
 - *Note that it is not expected that this change will result in a significant number of people submitting paper applications, but the option will be of great value for those few who need it. If it turns out that we have this wrong, we are committed to opening the discussion back up.*
- Prohibits landlords from requiring a tenant to use a portal for applying, but preserves the right of a landlord to enter application information into a portal;
- Ensures tenants can make rent and other payments by check or other commercially reasonable means.

The Oregon Law Center's mission is to achieve justice for low-income communities in Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services.



- *Note that nothing in the bill requires landlords to accept cash, only that they allow commercially reasonable, non-electronic means for tenants to pay. Checks would be a common example, as well as money orders, certified checks, or other alternatives.*
- Ensures tenants can access facilities to which they are entitled under the rental agreement - like common spaces, laundry machines, parking, and storage or garbage and recycling areas - without having to use a smartphone app.
 - *Note that this is a simple extension of protection passed last year via the bi-partisan [HB 3378](#). That bill ensured the option of a non-digital method of accessing a unit or building's front door; SB 1523A simply extends that concept to ensure access to other important facilities.*

SB 1523A protects tenants from unintended penalties. Under current law, tenants required to use digital payment systems routinely incur processing fees they must pay every month, and can face late fees or even risk eviction due to technical errors, connectivity issues, or lack of access to technology. Just last week, our office worked with a client for whom the online portal was a huge barrier and a factor in his eviction case. And last month, I spoke with an older woman whose management company switched to a portal requirement, who got confused in trying to make her payment online, tried to pay instead via money order, which was rejected, and who ended up in eviction court. SB 1523A prohibits requiring tenants to pay through an electronic portal and blocks landlords from terminating tenancies for non-electronic payment. This prevents unfair penalties tied to technology access rather than tenant compliance.

SB 1523A advances housing justice and reduces inequities. Housing stability is a cornerstone of economic and personal well-being. Barriers to basic functions — like paying rent, applying for housing, or accessing facilities— should not disproportionately affect people based on income, age, or disability. SB 1523A helps level the playing field by ensuring tenants with limited or no access to digital tools have equal ability to exercise their rights and fulfill their responsibilities.

SB 1523A is about access to housing, not opposition to technology. The bill does not ban portals or digital tools, but rather simply ensures that basic housing functions remain accessible to people who cannot reliably use digital systems.

Housing stability should not depend on owning a smartphone, having broadband access, or navigating complex online portals. By affirming tenants' right to access housing systems without being forced into digital platforms, this bill strengthens housing stability, equity, and fairness for tenants across the state.

For all of these reasons, we respectfully urge support of SB 1523A. Thank you for your consideration.