

Submitter: Meg Kausch

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4123

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

My name is Meg Kausch and I am writing on behalf of renters in Oregon in support of HB 4123A, which will support Landlord Confidentiality, and Tenant Privacy of Information. This bill was negotiated with stakeholders and also had amendments in the House, and now has no known opposition. Tenant privacy and confidentiality is important to me because it affirms what we all already assume to be true - protected and private information should be kept protected and private. If there are no clear boundaries for how to secure this protection for renters, it subjects them to significant vulnerability and limits the control and management of information that we would all already consider to be kept protected and private.

In the course of applying for, securing, and maintaining housing, tenants and applicants share significant amounts of personally identifying, financially sensitive, and other private information with their landlords and property managers. It is well recognized that public disclosure of this type of data can put people at risk of theft, fraud, and other harms.

This legislature has taken important steps in many contexts to provide reasonable consumer protections against inappropriate disclosure of private information. However, there is currently no Oregon landlord-tenant law providing confidentiality protection for the sensitive information that landlords gather.

HB 4123A will add a clear and simple provision to Oregon's Landlord Tenant law, specifying that certain personally identifying, financially sensitive, and other private information may not be disclosed without the written consent of the tenant, unless in response to a court order.

The bill clearly defines the types of information that must be kept confidential, and specifies appropriate exemptions for business necessities like conducting background or reference checks, or as necessary for the landlord's use in any administrative, court, or collection actions. The bill also ensures that affordable housing providers would be exempt from any contradictory requirements imposed by their local, state, or federal funders.

Privacy protections are urgently needed in housing, where we all want and deserve to feel safe at home. Tenants need to know their private information is secure. And landlords will benefit from having a bright line in the statute that will provide legal clarity, consistency and certainty.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Sincerely,
Meg Kausch