



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON

Charlie Hales, Mayor
Amanda Fritz, Commissioner
Nick Fish, Commissioner
Dan Saltzman, Commissioner
Steve Novick, Commissioner

March 5, 2013

Rep. Carolyn Tomei, Chair
House Human Services and Housing Committee
900 Court St. NE, Hearing Room D
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Tomei and Members of the Committee,

We write to urge your support for House Bill 2639, a thoughtful and balanced approach to reforming the Housing Choice Voucher program (Section 8). It reflects a value we all share: that everyone, regardless of the source or level of their income, should have the opportunity to choose where they live.

Section 8, administered by local housing authorities, is our state's largest housing program. It is also our most effective tool to create access to the private rental housing market for low-income Oregonians.

Under current law, while landlords are prohibited from discriminating against a prospective tenant on the basis of "source of income," landlords are not required to process applications from voucher-holders. This has the effect of limiting choice and concentrating poverty.

HB 2639 promotes choice for low-income families and individuals, while building in important protections for participating landlords. To be successful, the Section 8 program must work well for landlords as well as voucher-holders. Our local housing authority, Home Forward, pioneered forward-thinking reforms to the Section 8 program in Multnomah County, cutting through red tape and making the program more user-friendly. Their work is a model for other jurisdictions, and we're proud that it helped inform this bill.

Under the proposed legislation, landlords will be able to exercise their right to fully and fairly review all rental applications, consistent with Fair Housing laws. At the same time, voucher-holders will no longer be stigmatized by ads in local newspapers that declare "No Section 8."

The City of Portland, through its State Legislative Agenda, supports efforts to "Remove Barriers to Housing Choice." HB 2639 promotes housing choice statewide while reforming administration of the Section 8 program. We are proud to support HB 2639 and urge your support.

Respectfully,

Charlie Hales
Mayor

Dan Saltzman
Commissioner

Amanda Fritz
Commissioner

Steve Novick
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Nick Fish
Commissioner