



The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 100-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

February 12, 2020

To: Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair

Re: [SB 1534](#) - Allows Oregon Labor and Industries to provide support to Oregonians in cases involving housing discrimination - **Support**

The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that the federal government shares with other levels of government the responsibility to provide equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing for all persons in the United States regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports passage of SB 1534. Today, Oregonians experiencing housing discrimination must seek assistance from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Prior to 2015, Oregon Labor and Industries (OLI) and HUD were partners in enforcing federal fair housing laws. SB 1534 would resume Oregon's relationship with HUD and allow OLI to enforce housing discrimination claims beginning in January 2021, nine months earlier than existing legislation would have allowed. We believe Oregonians will be better served when their own state agency, with an understanding of local conditions, is available to protect them from unlawful bias and discrimination.

There is clear evidence that Oregonians currently experience housing discrimination. A recent Portland fair housing audit testing report showed that one in four prospective renters faced discrimination because of their race, national origin, or source of income. A Washington County audit test showed similar conditions. Our federal fair housing laws have been in place for more than 50 years; it is inexcusable that this rate of discrimination persists. OLI should be commended for taking steps to resume its investigatory and enforcement role and supported in that effort. Access to a safe and decent place to call home should be available to all.

The Legislature has invested significant funding to increase the supply of affordable housing across the state. This bill will help ensure that all Oregonians, especially people of color and people with disabilities, have access to critically needed housing free of discrimination.

Thank you for an opportunity to discuss this bill.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca L. Gladstone".

Rebecca Gladstone
LWVOR President

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature reads "Debbie Aiona" and the second signature reads "Nancy G. Donovan".

Debbie Aiona and Nancy Donovan
LWVOR Housing portfolio