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April 3, 2013

*The Oregonian* Editorial Board  
1320 SW Broadway  
Portland, OR 97201

Dear Editorial Board:

This letter is written in response to *The Oregonian's* March 28<sup>th</sup> editorial, "Bias in Section 8 Proposal," which addresses House Bill 2639, a bill that seeks to end housing discrimination against Section 8 voucher holders in Oregon. In the editorial, *The Oregonian* offers a familiar argument against proposed anti-discrimination legislation; that although ending discrimination is generally a good idea, the practical consequences of doing so in this case present a burden that is too heavy to bear. We disagree. Laws intending to prevent or remedy discrimination nearly always present additional responsibilities and requirements on those to whom they apply. For example, without Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or the Americans with Disabilities Act, employers and businesses would have greater freedom in their personnel and accommodation decisions. Today, one can hardly imagine our society without them. This is so because we have collectively decided that the burdens associated with those laws are outweighed by the benefits they provide.

Eliminating racism and prejudice is hard work. It requires patience, commitment, perseverance, and sacrifice. Last summer, *The Oregonian* published its "Locked Out" series, which showed that discrimination against Section 8 voucher-holders means, in significant part, that communities of color, recent immigrants, and people with disabilities are being deprived of housing in areas of high opportunity. Current Oregon law, which sanctions the discrimination that was highlighted in those articles, has only exacerbated the problem of segregation in our community. Housing justice advocates have fought against the impact of these laws for years, demonstrating remarkable patience, commitment, perseverance and sacrifice in their effort to curtail discrimination in our state. Communities of color and persons with disabilities have shown similar resilience throughout the many years they have been told, unjustifiably, where they can and cannot live.

We have an opportunity, now, to reverse the discriminatory effects of the current law. As *The Oregonian* itself notes in its editorial, “discrimination, whether based on gender or race or disability or family size, works against everyone.” We agree with this. Let’s embrace this opportunity to move toward ending discrimination. The benefits outweigh the burden. House Bill 2639 is good for Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K Busse', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Kyle Busse