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SB 335 – Human Relations – Discrimination in Housing – Income Based Housing Subsidies

Position: Favorable

Hearing date: February 10, 2026

Committee: Economic Matters Committee

My name is Katrina Emmerson Kugel, the Government Relations Manager at SEEC. On behalf of our organization, a community provider of services to over 300 adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD), I encourage a favorable report on SB 335.

Under the 1999 *Olmstead* Supreme Court decision, people with disabilities have the right to live in the most integrated, community-based setting possible and not be forced into institutions. The right of people with disabilities to choose where they live can only be achieved when they are able to use their housing vouchers without economic discrimination by landlords. By not allowing landlords to use credit history and financial information before they received their voucher, it will lessen this practice.

People with disabilities are disproportionately low-income and therefore rely heavily on Housing Vouchers and other income-based subsidies. At the same time, barriers to building credit can undermine their ability to use these vouchers successfully, limiting their choice in housing options.

Stephen, someone we support who receives a housing voucher, was recently asked what he likes about living on his own and he said *"Freedom, going wherever I want, people, can have get togethers and go on dates and travel places"*. He likes that he can *"Decide where I want to go and who I want to see."* In terms of what he likes to do at his apartment, he said *"Game nights and get togethers and potlucks"*. He said *"I'll be sad"* if he didn't have his own place, and describes his neighborhood as *"Peaceful quiet"* and adds he *"made a lot of new friends"*.

The ability to choose housing in one's community means dignity, choice, and authority for all people, including those with I/DD. It is a right that must be protected.

Extra income or credit checks by landlords are not necessary because Public Housing Authorities already check income, set rents based on what a household can afford, and change assistance when income changes.

In addition, credit scores were not created to decide who should get housing, and they usually do not include rent payment history. Research and guidance from HUD show that using credit scores for people with housing assistance can unfairly harm people with disabilities, Black renters, women-led households, and very low-income families.

SB 335 makes clear what screening practices are appropriate. It still allows landlords to screen tenants, but ensures the rules are fair and focused on what matters. The bill helps reduce unnecessary denials and barriers so people with disabilities can find housing in their communities. We believe this legislation will support long-term housing stability across the state.

We encourage a favorable report for SB 335. Thank you.