



washington low income  
housing alliance

## Make Tenant Screening Reports Fair and Accurate for All Renters

Enact Part 3 of the Fair Tenant Screening Act  
Facebook/Twitter Hashtag: #FTSA2014

**The lack of a portable  
tenant screening report  
standard is a real obstacle  
to a home.**



### **Thomas's Story**

"I was living in a homeless shelter in Tacoma and was trying to find a rental apartment. I had budgeted enough money for the average studio apartment in Tacoma, including first and last rent, a deposit, and at least three tenant screening reports, at roughly \$35 each. **My transition from shelter to home took three more months than I expected.**

I had to keep paying for repeat tenant screening reports that various landlords requested during my search. **After I ran out of money paying for the reports, I had to stop my search until the next paycheck.** If I could've purchased just one standard report that all landlords had to accept, then I could have applied to more places and moved into my new apartment much sooner.

And had I been able to leave the shelter sooner, I could've saved Tacoma money and opened up space for someone whose situation was worse than mine."

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### **Portable tenant screening reports just make sense.**

If you've ever repeatedly paid for the same costly tenant screening report in the search for a home, then you'll understand the need for this legislation. The average renter will have to pay for three or more tenant screening reports when they are trying to find new housing.

Seattle-based social service organization Solid Ground surveyed tenants who used the nonprofit's programs. **They found these tenants spent on average \$166 for repeat screening reports during a single housing search.** These screening fees can become a significant moving cost, especially for families on limited incomes, already burdened with a deposit and first month's rent. And for what? One tenant screening report has virtually the same information as the other reports. **Wouldn't it be more efficient and practical to buy just one online report and provide the log-in information to all the landlords requesting this data?** This legislation aims to do just that.

### **How does it work?**

Here is an example of how it could work:

1. A renter buys a standard online tenant screening report that meets the legal definition of a current and comprehensive report\*.
2. When this renter provides access to this secure, online report to landlords, they should not be able to charge this prospective tenant for another report.
3. Landlords will still be free to use their own tenant screening company, but they won't be able to charge the tenant for this cost.

\*Advocates will work with stakeholders, including landlords, to define a current and comprehensive report. One possibility is that landlords could access these reports through a secure online portal using a tenant screening company-generated password. These reports would only be valid for one month after purchase.

### **Tenants and landlords benefit.**

This legislation will be beneficial to all renters and property owners in Washington. The current state of tenant screening reports is particularly harmful to low-income renters who are already cost-burdened with security deposits and first and last month's rent. And more landlords will be provided with a comprehensive screening report, giving them the information they need to make a solid rental decision.

### **What is the legislative ask?**

**Support the Fair Tenant Screening Act.** Support practical and efficient tenant screening report portability, so people have better opportunities to afford a home.

### **Tell us your tenant screening fees story.**

Do you have a story similar to Thomas'? Tweet us your experience at [twitter.com/wliha](https://twitter.com/wliha) using the hashtag [#FTSA2014](https://twitter.com/FTSA2014) or tell us your story at 206.442.9455 x208 or [info@wliha.org](mailto:info@wliha.org).