

Honored Senators,

I am writing to ask you to carefully assess the context and implication of SB 458 and then vote NO. While reflecting the concerns of many others familiar with land use issues and market trends, I am writing on my own behalf as an architect serving as President of our neighborhood association as well as land use chair.

The longstanding purpose for zoning regulations for housing is to provide options for a wide range of housing choices while addressing quality of life concerns such as access to light, air, acoustic and visual privacy, provisions for outdoor recreation, garden space, as well as neighborhood architectural character, safe levels of occupancy and support for transportation and infrastructure.

These bills all work against those considerations with top down radical changes to zoning codes.

SB 458 and its complement HB 2283 eliminate minimum lot sizes as a zoning tool and substitute allowed housing unit density as the criteria for lot divisions and lot size. HB 2565 and SB 458 also prohibit covenants that might restrict such land divisions including side and front setbacks and lot size. In plain English, even the smaller lots in single family neighborhoods could be divided into 4 lots as 4 housing units (6 in Portland).

House Bill 2565 allows partitioning for the creation of lots for duplexes, ADUs, and all Middle Housing. It also prohibits all covenants that might prevent any lot divisions, as well as any regulations for setbacks or lot size restrictions that would prevent such division. (Very similar to HB 2283 above.)

As you may be aware, HB 458 and the similar House Bills all appear to be orchestrated by 1000 Friends/Welcome Portland Neighbors. This organization's agenda is tightly aligned with the Up for Growth and Seattle-based Sightline Institute promoting their "go big" campaign approach to housing. Their game plan is to use state legislators to bypass local government control of land use to advance their ideology laced vision. (Sightline newsletter <https://tinyurl.com/axap8hzc>).

In weighing the evidence please consider:

1. These bills are unapologetic efforts to eliminate any form of single family zoning within most urban growth boundaries, a process begun in 2019 with HB 2001. The declared "housing emergency" and "housing justice" arguments are frankly lipstick on the pig.
2. In Oregon, Comprehensive Plans must include a 20 year supply of land zoned for all types of housing including single family housing. Assuming that LCDC is carrying out its responsibilities for approving plans, there is no statistical basis for claiming that single family zoning is materially contributing to a crisis of affordability.
3. By encouraging exponentially increased random density for housing, advocates claim that the market will produce a novel blend of generic housing units whose sheer numbers will translate into affordability. Short of a massive tax payer funded investment in state sponsored housing, this will not occur irrespective of zoning.
4. While these bills don't mandate demolishing single family homes, they prevent local governments from planning and zoning for the most desired housing type, thereby engineering a shortage. Such market manipulation will contribute to driving up the price of land, and especially land in existing single family neighborhoods with larger lots in two ways: by creating a shortage of single family houses, and by increasing the potential for redeveloping the underlying lots for higher density housing.
5. Behind the ideological curtain are the money - investor interests seeking to increase density entitlements that will benefit the global investor class. By increasing the underlying value of the land, developers of rental property will be empowered to easily outbid homeowners for single family lots and thus transform them into income generating properties, especially in lower income areas of our towns and cities -- all cleverly promoted under the guise of solving a "housing