

Garrett West
Medford City Council
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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire
Attn: Chair Senator Jeff Golden
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Medford City Council Member's Opposition to SB 78 –
Targeting Wildfire Survivors and a Barrier to Housing Stability**

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

As a member of the Medford City Council, I am deeply concerned that **SB 78 unfairly targets wildfire survivors and restricts the ability of rural communities to respond to Oregon's growing housing crisis**. Southern Oregon has suffered devastating wildfire losses. This bill makes recovery even harder by imposing arbitrary restrictions on families trying to rebuild after disaster and limiting the flexibility communities need to address their long-term housing needs.

For wildfire survivors, **SB 78 is a direct barrier to recovery**. Many lost everything and are now navigating the difficult and expensive process of rebuilding. Requiring that replacement homes be no more than 110% of the original structure, or capped at 2,500 square feet, ignores how families live today. Homeowners should not be forced to rebuild outdated designs that no longer fit their needs.

Oregon is already in a severe housing crisis, with supply failing to meet demand. At a time when we need to build more homes, **this bill would make it even harder for families—particularly those in rural and fire-affected areas—to create long-term housing solutions**. Many rural residents rely on multi-generational living, where extended families share housing due to rising costs and limited availability. Restricting the size of replacement homes makes this even more difficult, forcing families into housing that does not accommodate their reality.

Additionally, this bill ignores the need for modern, energy-efficient housing. Older homes were built under outdated building codes, and restricting replacement home sizes prevents homeowners from incorporating sustainable, fire-resistant materials, accessibility features, and energy-efficient designs that require additional space. Limiting home sizes in wildfire-prone areas is counterproductive when we should be

encouraging more resilient, climate-smart rebuilding efforts.

Further, new homes need space for aging-in-place features like single-story layouts, wider hallways, and accessible bathrooms. SB 78 makes it harder for seniors and people with disabilities to remain in their communities.

This legislation creates unnecessary burdens on those already struggling to recover while doing nothing to address Oregon's housing crisis. Families should be able to rebuild homes that reflect their needs—not be forced into arbitrary restrictions that make it harder to stay in their communities.

I urge you to oppose SB 78 and instead focus on policies that support wildfire survivors, strengthen housing availability, and promote sustainable rebuilding efforts.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Garrett West
Medford City Council