

Ecumenical Ministries *of Oregon*

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

For the record, my name is Kim Wagner, and I am a Public Policy Associate with the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. In collaboration with over 150 congregations, organizations, and interfaith partners, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) works with and for Oregonians through participating in community-supported political advocacy and providing direct services for thousands of people through our 6 different programs to serve Oregonians who are immigrants, refugees, experiencing homelessness, or low-income. **I write in support of SB 847.**

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EMO wants to express our support for Senate Bill 847, which would expand the current exemption from prevailing wage requirements for affordable housing to apply to the affordable housing portion of mixed-use projects. Oregon law currently requires affordable housing developers to pay the higher prevailing wage rate for any development -- including an affordable housing project -- that includes commercial space. SB 847 would expand options for affordable housing developers to consider projects they otherwise would likely turn down due to this requirement.

A 2019 study from the Oregon Housing and Community Services Department found that prevailing wage rules at that time added about 9 percent to the total cost of each regulated-affordable home. During a statewide affordable housing crisis, we cannot afford this additional expense. By extending the exemption to the affordable housing portion of mixed-use projects, SB 847 will enable affordable housing developers to incorporate childcare facilities, small business storefronts, and other community-identified priorities that are classified as commercial uses – while creating more work that does pay prevailing wages for the construction of those commercial spaces.

The Oregonians EMO serves need affordable housing and additional community resources now more than ever before. Allowing the opportunity for more affordable housing to be built in with community cornerstones — such as childcare facilities, health clinics, libraries, and other essential businesses — and other essential will offer our friends and neighbors more resilience and stability. Living in close proximity to these businesses will allow for Oregonians to be involved with their community while having easier access to resources they may be in need of. We want to encourage the development of affordable housing and community ties while affirming housing as a human right when and how we can. We want to support Oregonians facing housing instability; SB 847 will help to ensure there are more options for affordable housing for our friends and neighbors in need. We call on this committee to expand the exemption to the affordable housing component of mixed-use projects and encourage an “aye” vote on this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration,
Kim Wagner