

Submitter: Jennifer Letz  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3746

Chair and Members of the Committee,

As the Mayor of Sisters, I want to share my support for HB 3746. While there are many possible benefits to this bill - like facilitating the construction of more affordable housing - I want to bring another benefit to your attention.

Sisters, like many Oregon cities, is simultaneously struggling with creating more affordable housing AND protecting our communities from wildfire. Currently, these two goals are in opposition of each other. Why?

Research into the wide-spread destruction of wildfires we've seen impact so many U.S. cities over the last 10 years shows structure spacing is one of the culprits in losing large numbers of homes. Current recommendations say structures need to be at least 20 feet apart to reduce the vulnerability of one structure starting the neighboring structures on fire.

Yet, one of the only tools a city has left to assist in affordability is increasing density by allowing smaller houses on smaller lots. This often creates neighborhoods where homes are only 10 feet apart from each other. While this can bring down the cost of construction, we have now increased the risk of losing homes due to wildfire. This problem is exacerbated when we still do not have any home hardening or defensible space codes in Oregon builders and homeowners need to follow. Our citizens that desperately need affordable housing absolutely cannot afford to lose their homes to wildfire.

If this bill passes and spurs more construction of condominium structures, we'll be able to build more units per acre adjoining each other in one building. Not only will this reduce the need for tiny lots with dangerous spacing between homes, but condo buildings often have supplemental fire prevention elements like sprinklers, firewalls, and fire-resistant building materials like brick, concrete, or metal that are rarely found in single-family homes.

Oregon's future needs to be wildfire resilient. Allowing condos will help us provide safer and more affordable housing to our residents.

Thank you,  
Jennifer Letz  
Mayor, City of Sisters