

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Dear Esteemed Legislators of the Senate Committee On Housing and Development,

In the spirit of solidarity and with a firm belief in the principles of social justice and equity, I write to express my wholehearted support for Senate Bill 1537, an ambitious and much-needed initiative poised to transform the housing landscape in Oregon. This bill represents a significant stride towards addressing the systemic issues plaguing our housing system, and it's a beacon of hope for those of us who envision a society where housing is recognized as a fundamental human right, not a privilege.

SB 1537 is not just legislation; it's a clarion call for justice, equity, and progress. By establishing the Housing Accountability and Production Office (HAPO), this bill acknowledges the urgent need for a centralized effort to support and enforce housing laws that protect and empower communities, especially the marginalized and disenfranchised. This office's role in assisting local governments and housing developers to navigate and comply with housing laws is crucial for accelerating the pace of housing development while ensuring it is equitable and just.

Moreover, the bill's provision to allow housing developers to opt into amended local land use regulations is a testament to Oregon's commitment to flexibility and adaptability in meeting its housing needs. This flexibility, coupled with the expansion of eligibility for attorney fees for housing appeals, underscores a commitment to ensuring that disputes do not become barriers to the development of essential housing.

The establishment of grant and loan programs within key Oregon departments is a groundbreaking initiative to incentivize the development of affordable and moderate-income housing. These financial instruments are vital in bridging the funding gap that often hinders the development of affordable housing projects, thereby enabling more Oregonians to access quality, affordable homes.

Perhaps most importantly, SB 1537 empowers cities and counties to proactively support the development of affordable housing through grants and interest-free loans. This not only fosters local innovation and initiative but also ensures that the benefits of development are equitably distributed. The requirement for developers to contribute to the repayment of these loans, with a portion of the fees supporting fire districts, is a commendable effort to ensure that community infrastructure keeps pace with development.

The bill's directives to expedite the approval of housing developments and streamline the application process are critical measures to combat the housing crisis. By reducing bureaucratic hurdles and delays, we can accelerate the delivery of housing projects that are so desperately needed.

In conclusion, SB 1537 is more than legislation; it is a moral compass guiding Oregon towards a future where housing insecurity and homelessness are relics of the past. It embodies the values of equity, solidarity, and community, values that are at the heart of a just and equitable society. I urge you to pass SB 1537 and take a bold step towards realizing the dream of affordable, accessible, and equitable housing for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Devon Lawson-McCourt