

Submitter: Chris Marraccini  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

I am writing to express concern of Oregon's proposed House Bill 2138. It shows a lack of support for single family homes and would pose a significant threat to historic districts throughout Oregon and particularly Portland's East Multnomah County. While the overall goal is to create affordable housing, there are no guarantees this bill will achieve this goal.

In Portland, developers receive permits to demolish single family dwellings in order to build multi-unit housing with the intent that some of the units will be affordable. Unfortunately once the structures are built, many developers take the City's option of paying a fine instead of including affordable units. The fine is paid to City Hall. This process was reported in the Oregonian.

Thus there are already many new multi-unit structures built in Portland's Multnomah County with no affordable housing requirements and seemingly mostly empty. An inventory really needs to be taken of all the empty units currently available. A city full of empty apartments or ones that offer rents above affordability does not meet the goals of House Bill 2138. It instead incentivizes developers to demolish more single family dwellings in order to build high-end units that may remain empty.

There is a lack of inventory of single family homes in Portland's Multnomah County. This lack of inventory has caused an increase in home prices making it difficult for families to buy a house. Decreasing this inventory by allowing the demolition of more single family dwellings, only makes the remaining homes more expensive and out of reach for many families.

In many school systems, it is often noted that children of families who live in single family homes tend to stay in their schools longer, resulting in a more consistent education and usually a better academic outcome. Conversely, children who live in apartments usually have a higher mobility rate, resulting in a more inconsistent education and lower academic achievement.

Single family homes need to be saved and the inventory increased in order to give children a more stable life and education.

It is also very important for older historic homes be saved from demolition. They can and should be saved in order to increase single family housing inventory, and help maintain City and County neighborhood architectural and cultural integrity. In addition most older historic homes have been built using old-growth timber. They are built to

last! Tearing down a historic, old-growth timber house for a cheaper lower grade timber structure is a travesty! Old wiring and plumbing can be replaced, but old-growth timber usually cannot.

Also, most new multi-unit structures being built pave over front and back lawns and even parking strips. They have no garages or driveways, causing terrible parking problems.

Increased density and the paving over of greenspaces has compromised infrastructure and the environment. Loss of tree canopy and green spaces in Multnomah County, as reported by Portland State, have contributed to higher temperatures and heat dome issues in that area. People died!

It is difficult to support House Bill 2138, since there are no requirements that new multi-unit buildings that replace historic demolished ones need to be compatible with their surroundings. That means continued environmental and livability issues in many neighborhoods and cities.

Of the utmost importance and extremely disappointing is the lack of respect shown for historic preservation of Oregon's historic districts. Repealing requirements for demolition review shows a total disregard of the significance of history, architecture, culture, and the environment. In addition, if new structures to replace historic houses don't have clear rules about requiring affordable housing; what's the point! It is just money in the pocket of developers.