

Submitter: Anne Bellegia
On Behalf Of: Livable Ashland Alliance
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3589

HB 3589 is urgently needed, particularly in Southern Oregon where there has been an older age-skewed demographic for many years.

In the needs assessment for the Livable Ashland Alliance—Ashland's name for its membership in the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities, housing shortages and affordability emerged as an issue for those of all ages. But there are several reasons why this is of particular concern for seniors. First of all, sheer numbers—a third of Ashland seniors are age 62+, compared to 20% in the U.S. and 22% for Oregon. In addition, Ashland's housing stock is comprised of larger and older dwellings that lack age-friendly design and there is a limited number of smaller, newer options with universal design features. Those living on fixed income, especially those with inadequate retirement savings or Social Security benefits, cannot easily absorb unexpected increases in costs for housing and medical expenses. Living in a car or entirely unhoused presents particular health risks for those who are already frail or living with chronic disease. OHRA reports an increasing proportion of seniors among those they serve.

It's hard enough to get those who believed they could age-in-place to move but it's impossible if they don't have an alternative that is suitable for their needs. Providing seniors with right-sized, safe, and affordable housing may have the additional benefit of freeing up larger homes that can accommodate two to three times the number of occupants.

Anne Bellegia
Co-Chair, Livable Ashland Alliance