



WASHINGTON COUNTY

OREGON

March 9, 2023

Oregon Legislature
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Submitted via OLIS

RE: Support for HB 3174

Chair Dexter and members of the committee,

Thank you for your attention to this bill. As your committee knows, there are many components to the state-wide housing shortage, and we are happy to see the state looking for solutions that address multiple facets of the system. Cities and counties are ready to partner with the state, but we need your support.

Even a larger agency like ours struggles to find enough staff to perform vital tasks like permitting, plan review and inspection. We are still feeling the effects of the 2008 recession, when many people left this line of work, and community colleges were forced to pause their building training programs for several years. Currently, there just aren't enough qualified people to fill these jobs. Cities and counties are struggling to fill critical vacancies, and we end up essentially trading staff back and forth when we have job openings.

We permitted about 700 residential units in each of the past two fiscal years, and are on pace to permit about 800 this fiscal year. Most of these units are being constructed in our urban unincorporated areas, which are home to more than 200,000 Oregonians. With limited staffing and revenue sources, we are stretching our hard-working team members to cover both the long-term planning requirements of the state (e.g. middle housing and Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities) while also performing the needed permitting and inspection tasks for development. Due to staffing shortfalls, permitting and inspection timelines have grown longer for all development, including housing. Retirements and recruitment challenges have required us to limit the hours we are open to the public and re-directing staff time to focus on processing permits as quickly as we can.

Funding for additional local staff who can process planning applications, perform building plan reviews and inspections, and manage permits would help us expedite our timelines for review, but we need funding for those additional positions. I appreciate that this bill will help provide resources to hire more people to do the work, but we also need to look at training more people to perform this work.

The programs considered in this bill are focused on creating more capacity for local governments to do our portion of the housing development process. However, it does come with additional reporting and

administrative requirements. We ask you to balance the need to provide more capacity with the program's reporting requirements.

As we look to more solutions to the housing crisis, the state investments proposed in HB 3174 in these capacity building programs will go a long way in meeting those needs. I strongly encourage that any new legislative housing-related requirements on local governments include state funding support for local agency implementation.

We appreciate our partnership with the state in solving these systemic challenges and supporting our diverse and growing communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Stephen Roberts".

Stephen Roberts, AICP
Director of Land Use & Transportation