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SUBJECT: Support for SB 1578 – Rural Housing and Affordable Homeownership

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Angie Sullivan, and I submit this letter in strong support of SB 1578.

I work directly in rural land development and housing delivery across Oregon, including affordable housing models designed specifically for rural communities. The housing shortage in these areas is not abstract. It affects workforce retention, family stability, school enrollment, and the long-term viability of rural towns. SB 1578 provides practical tools that allow counties to respond to these challenges in a way that fits rural conditions.

The ability for qualifying rural counties to rezone limited acreage for residential development is especially important for creating attainable homeownership opportunities. Many rural communities have land that is no longer viable for traditional agricultural use but remains effectively locked out of housing development. Allowing up to 50 acres to be thoughtfully rezoned, with clear density standards and a defined sunset, creates space for modest-scale housing that can serve local workers, young families, and seniors without overwhelming infrastructure or working lands.

This flexibility is critical for the success of affordable housing models like SEED Homes, which focus on smaller, efficient, durable homes that are attainable for working households. These homes are well-suited to rural communities, but they require zoning pathways that allow modest density and predictable approvals. SB 1578 helps unlock that pathway.

The bill's expansion of accessory dwelling unit allowances in rural areas further strengthens affordability options. ADUs provide some of the fastest, lowest-cost housing solutions available. In rural settings, they support multigenerational living, housing for essential workers, and income stability for property owners. Expanding ADU opportunities on farmland with existing nonfarm dwellings aligns with how rural families already use their land.

SB 1578 does not mandate growth. It empowers local governments to make informed decisions based on community needs, available infrastructure, and local values. That local control is essential for responsibly increasing housing supply while preserving the character and function of rural Oregon.

I appreciate the Legislature's attention to rural housing and affordability challenges and urge your support of SB 1578. I also plan to testify in person to share additional perspective from direct experience delivering affordable housing in rural communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,


Angie Sullivan
Owner