

Submitter: Joseph Zehnder
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure: SB1537

Dear legislators,

I appreciate your focus this session on increasing housing supply and affordability in Oregon. With regards to SB 1537, I am writing to SUPPORT the provisions for infrastructure funding and climate-smart housing incentives, and to STRONGLY OPPOSE the provisions that allow large urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions without regard for Oregon's land use laws.

We all need to take a hard look at whether land supply is the most critical impediment to housing development in our communities. According to 1000 Friends of Oregon, our cities have well more than 10,000 acres of vacant land that is already designated for residential use inside their UGBs. What is keeping this supply from being developed? I am concerned that the real need for action on housing is being used to promote long standing and opportunistic desires by some developers, builders and landowners to develop without considering the full cost to communities.

I suspect that these already designated vacant sites need investments in some or all infrastructure – roads, sewers, water, sidewalks – to unlock them for housing production. State support for that infrastructure development could be a game changer for actually seeing them built for housing.

Adding land outside of the regular UGB process means diverting existing and these new infrastructure dollars away from the sites already determined to be the best, most efficient and sustainable places for a community to grow. Ignoring the work already done to get these site's shovel ready will surely take longer to deliver the new homes we need.

Don't believe all the hype. In times of emergency it makes sense to waive some rules. Such times also carry the risk of undoing systems that actually work to protect the public interest such as the UGB process.

Please, amend SB 1537 to remove the provision that bypasses land use laws to allow large UGB expansions. It's a distraction from real solutions to our housing crisis.

Thank you