

Date February 11, 2022

To: The Honorable Julie Fahey, Chair
House Committee On Housing

From: Carol Johnson, Land Use Planning Director

RE: HB 4118 (2022 Regular Session)

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 4118 and the proposed -1 Amendment.

Multnomah County applauds efforts to increase the supply of affordable workforce housing but we do not believe that HB 4118 and the -1 Amendment are the way to do so.

First, the bill preempts local planning and the established urban and rural reserves amendment process. While this seems to be intended to provide for well-planned Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) expansions in a transparent public process, in actuality it creates a new process centered on land owners and developers at the expense of farmland and meaningful community participation. The existing regional urban growth concept planning process gives all communities a voice in how the region will grow and HB 4118 would needlessly weaken this process.

Urban reserves are intended to reserve land only if an expansion of the UGB is warranted within a 50 year time horizon. They are not intended to jump the queue ahead of lands already located inside the UGB. Urban reserves typically contain working farms contributing locally grown food and they contribute to the local economy. This is especially problematic because residents and farmers in the reserve areas rely on the relative certainty that urban reserves are not first in line for urban development.

Land supply within the UGB is not currently a barrier to affordable workforce housing. The UGB includes at least a 20-year supply of land for the development of all housing types. Further, HB 2001 (2019 Regular Session) effectively ended single family zoning across all medium and large cities in Oregon. The new requirement to allow ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, 4-plices and cottage clusters in areas previously zoned for single family residences has increased the potential workforce housing supply within the existing UGB in a way that allows all neighborhoods to share in the provision of affordable housing.

HB 4118 places workforce housing relatively far from employment centers. Because transit options are typically weaker, less frequent and less convenient, if not entirely missing in the outer fringes of the UGB, the types of annexations resulting from HB 4118 would likely increase reliance on automobiles for

workers in these developments. Auto oriented developments are bad for the resident's pocketbook, but they also worsen pedestrian safety and contribute further to air pollution and the climate crisis.

The inclusion of workforce commercial is helpful primarily for providing services to the local workforce, but it does not translate into 1 to 1 employment for residents. There is still likely to be a net out-commute by concentrating work-force housing on the outer areas of the UGB.

Requiring workforce housing within UGB expansions may prevent the use of those same lands for other uses better suited to the outer areas of the UGB.

Finally, it is unclear what happens to annexed property if the required binding agreements and covenants fail to produce infrastructure improvements within the required 2-year timeframe.

We oppose the HB 4118 -1 Amendment in its current form for the following reasons:

First, the subject of the study is vague and potentially too broad. A successful task force would need a specific set of facts specifying what problem exists and how those facts are likely to be impacting the residents of the state.

Second, the makeup of the task force appears to be skewed towards speculators and developers and less so towards housing advocates and community leaders. Because cities and counties across the state are already working towards increasing the supply of affordable housing, we think a more appropriate task force would be focused on increasing funding support to local jurisdictions specifically targeting stable housing options for the most vulnerable Oregonians.

Third, the focus on the provision of adequate land for large-scale industrial or manufacturing development ignores the needs of existing small and medium businesses in our communities.

Finally, an assumption running throughout both the introduced bill and the -1 Amendment is the idea that the UGB itself is a barrier to housing and economic development – however, this is not the case. The UGB serves a valuable purpose. Urban development is more efficient within the UGB and the working farms and forests outside the UGB are protected from urban sprawl and an inefficient hop-scotch development pattern, as well as the inevitable ever expanding (and widening) clogged suburban network of freeways. Please join us in opposing HB 4118 and the -1 amendment.

Sincerely,



Carol Johnson

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