

Subject: Strong support of HB 2008

Greetings, Chair Fahey and Committee Members,

My name is LaVeta Gilmore Jones and I am the Co-Executive Director of Leaven Community in Portland, OR. The Leaven Community Land and Housing Coalition is a coalition of faith communities in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington County, leveraging our land and resources so that all Oregonians can come home.

I am an African-American woman who was born and raised in inner NE Portland where my large extended family also lived. Today, only three cousins remain in the neighborhood. The rest of our family, including myself, can no longer afford to live in the place we call home because of the high cost of rentals and housing. The community of displaced African-Americans seniors is growing and there is a great need for affordable housing located in areas where food, transportation and medical services are accessible. Allowing faith communities to build affordable housing stabilizes our neighborhoods and is an anti-displacement strategy.

Our coalition has five projects in the pipeline and can have even more if HB 2008 is passed. There is a huge cost savings to building using faith land because we already own the land and the land is already zoned for residential, in almost all cases. Current land use regulations can be a lengthy process and add cost to these projects. We experienced this lengthy process from 2005-2007 when our own faith community went through a conditional use process (costing #30,000), only to have our plans vanquished in the 2007 recession. If building affordable housing on faith land had been an allowable use of land, there would now be multiple units of affordable housing on six lots in our neighborhood. Unfortunately, there are units of market rate housing on those lots. Removing regulatory barriers for religious organizations to build on the land we already own will shorten the process of creating more housing supply in our neighborhoods and help leverage available local acreage!

Your action is crucial. Please approve the HB 2008 so that faith communities across the state of Oregon can build affordable housing on our land with as few barriers as possible.

Our neighbors need your help, creativity and support in leveraging every option and financing stream to begin solving the crisis of housing instability and homelessness in our city and county.

Sincerely,

LaVeta Gilmore Jones
Leaven Community/Salt & Light Lutheran
Co-Director