

Submitter: Cynthia Yee
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2964

Chair Marsh, Co-Vice Chair Anderson, Co-Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to providing Oregonians with affordable housing solutions. As a member of First Unitarian in Portland, Oregon, I am dedicated to advocating for affordable housing measures for Oregon citizens.

I am writing to you to advocate for the passage of HB 2964.

The affordable housing crisis in Oregon and across the country was 50 years in the making and will take a concerted effort over many years and through many means to overcome. Especially hard hit are low-income individuals and families, whose income has not kept up with the fast-rising cost and limited availability of housing in both urban and rural communities throughout the state.

HB 2964 codifies and broadens eligibility in the OHCS Predevelopment Program and provides a grant option for those entities that are cash-poor and land rich. A grant option can be critical to groups like faith communities. Many faith communities have discussed the importance of using their excess land for a community benefit, especially affordable housing. But they do not have the money to do the upfront feasibility and community engagement work that readies their properties for a developer to come in and build.

Reasons for OHCS Grants to do Feasibility and Community Engagement

1. Faith land is often in coveted urban areas where land is scarce and the need for housing is great.
2. Many faith properties already have roads and utilities in place and are in areas with needed services for low-income families.
3. Many faith groups will sell their land at a discount, more than offsetting any grant dollars provided.
4. Many faith communities are land rich, but cash poor. Often they provide other needed services to their communities, like food pantries and day shelters. By helping them sell their land for affordable housing, those dollars help them stabilize and continue providing needed community services. This is a win-win.

There are currently at least 60 acres of faith land throughout the state that are ready to be developed, but for the lack of funds for feasibility and community engagement. This bill will provide a needed option to cover a range of things from land surveys to community engagement efforts to building neighborhood approval. On their own, these costs can often total upwards of \$100,000 and prevent projects from getting off the ground. Giving organizations access to pre-development grants will help to ensure that projects are able to move forward.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Cynthia Yee

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF HB 2964!