

Submitter: Andrew Blumm
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

My name is Andrew Blumm and I am an architect in Oregon. I am in support of House Bill 2138 because it will augment the supply of housing across the state.

I personally know of a few instances where homeowners have attempted to gain historic status for their neighborhood solely to discourage middle housing. To willfully exclude smaller, more affordable dwellings from a neighborhood is xenophobic at best, but I would argue that it should be considered violence towards lower income individuals.

Why should we call this violence? Reducing the supply of housing by blocking or slowing the new construction of homes invariably increases the cost of housing. With increased costs, there will be increased homelessness. A recent study showed that a \$100 increase in median rent will result in a 9% increase in homelessness in that particular area. And being unhoused can result in shorter lifespans, exposure to drugs and abuse, and lifelong health issues. This effect has become ubiquitous in locales where the supply of housing diminishes relative to the population. For those that choose to encourage these outcomes, we have a responsibility to call it what it is: violence.

Our state now has the opportunity to do justice for its residents, reduce housing costs for all Oregonians, and encourage diversity in our neighborhoods.

I specifically urge the committee to retain the language in SECTION 22. (1), which repeals the requirement for demolition review for houses which are listed as "contributing" in National Register Historic Districts. Undemocratic and landowner-controlled National Register of Historic Places districts are distinct from local historic districts that have democratic oversight from a body — the city council — that is legally allowed to consider any factors other than historic preservation, and can consider the interests of tenants as well as landowners. This bill retains Oregon cities' ability to preserve historical resources and does not impact local historic districts, but grants cities the flexibility they need to address our ongoing housing crisis and ensure that we can build housing for Oregonians of all ages, wages, and stages of life.

Respectfully,
Andrew Blumm