



May 5, 2025

Statement of Pacific Legal Foundation before the Oregon House Committee on Housing and Homelessness in support of SB 974, *Relating to the timeline for reviewing land use applications for housing*

Chair Marsh and members of the Committee:

My name is James Manley, and I am State Policy Chief at Pacific Legal Foundation. PLF is a nonprofit public interest law firm dedicated to defending Americans' liberties when threatened by government overreach. For 50 years, we have been helping Americans fight for their constitutional rights in courthouses and legislatures nationwide. We have won 18 cases at the United States Supreme Court, 17 protecting property rights. And we have helped enact more than 60 laws in legislatures across the country, more than 20 protecting property rights.

SB 974 is a crucial step toward addressing Oregon's housing crisis by streamlining permitting processes, expanding housing opportunities, and reducing regulatory barriers that contribute to high housing costs and limited supply. **Critically, this bill respects the primacy of local control over development approval decisions—it simply requires that those decisions be made promptly and transparently.**

Importantly, this kind of reform has already proven successful elsewhere. The similar Fast-Track Permits Act—which requires decisions on all building permits within 60 days—was passed in Kansas this session, with strong bipartisan support and the support of Governor Laura Kelly. The Kansas experience shows that streamlining permitting can be a unifying, nonpartisan solution to a deeply pressing problem. Oregon can and should follow this proven path by at least enacting the more modest reforms proposed by SB 974.

Oregon, like much of the nation, faces a growing housing affordability crisis. According to research by housing economist Kevin Erdmann, the United States faces a significant housing supply deficit, with millions of additional homes needed to meet demand. SB 974's provisions for expedited permitting directly address this issue by reducing the bureaucratic delays that stifle housing production, while preserving the authority of local governments to make substantive land use decisions.



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SB 974 changes nothing about what is approved—it simply requires that the decision happen in a timely manner. Streamlined permitting reduces costs, mitigates uncertainty, and encourages more housing production. Builders often cite permitting delays as a major barrier to building new housing. Research from Pacific Legal Foundation underscores that such delays exacerbate housing scarcity and affordability challenges. By requiring municipalities to issue final decisions on qualifying permit applications within 90 days, SB 974 provides builders with the certainty needed to move forward with projects, fostering a healthier housing market.

Pro-housing policies not only make economic sense but also enjoy broad public support. Evidence from YIMBY Action shows that state lawmakers who champion housing reforms, such as zoning liberalization and streamlined approval processes, have a high rate of reelection. Voters increasingly recognize that increasing housing supply is key to addressing affordability and improving quality of life.

In conclusion, SB 974 is a forward-thinking piece of legislation that addresses Oregon's housing challenges with practical and effective solutions. By streamlining permitting processes and encouraging housing development, this bill lays the groundwork for a more affordable, equitable, and prosperous Oregon. We urge the committee to advance SB 974 and ensure its swift passage.

Respectfully,

James M. Manley
State Policy Chief