



Feb. 8th 2024

Rachael Duke, Board Chair - Community Partners for Affordable Housing

Kymberly Horner – Vice-chair - Portland Community Reinvestment Inc.

Kristy Rodriguez, Treasurer – Housing Authority of Malheur & Harney Counties

Shannon Vilhauer – Secretary - Habitat for Humanity of Oregon

Trell Anderson – NW Housing Alternatives

Jessica Blakley - Salem Housing Authority

David Brandt - Housing Works

Rita Grady – Polk CDC

Maria Elena Guerra - Farmworker Housing Development Corp

Nkenge Harmon Johnson – Urban League of Portland

Erica Mills – NeighborWorks Umpqua

Hai Nguyen – East County Housing (CDC of Oregon)

Sheila Stiley – NW Coastal Housing

Senate Committee On Housing and Development
900 Court St. NE, S-409,
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Sen. Jama, and Vice Chair Anderson,

On behalf of Housing Oregon we write to you in support of SB1537. Housing Oregon is the mission-based, member-driven affordable housing trade association that brings together over 90 diverse organizations committed to fostering affordable housing and community development throughout the state.

Housing Oregon members are significant contributors to Oregon's economy, with our members' housing development activities contributing over \$100 million annually in construction payroll. Oregon's housing shortfall of 140,000 units, coupled with the need to create over 440,000 units in the next 20 years, underscores the urgency of addressing our housing crisis. Housing Oregon members are poised and ready to be part of the next wave of housing creation, but we can't do it alone.

We urge you to support SB 1537, which proposes the establishment of the Housing Accountability and Production Office (HAPO) and allocates over \$500 million for moderate- and affordable-housing production, among other strategies to increase housing availability. This bill aligns with Governor Kotek's vision to build more housing to counter Oregon's long-standing housing underproduction and to tackle the homelessness crisis. Research clearly links homelessness rates to housing costs.

Previous legislative efforts, like HB 2001, have laid the groundwork for housing solutions in Oregon. Building on this work, SB 1537 also introduces necessary land use tools, enabling housing development applications to adopt new standards, thereby saving time and money. The bill aims to streamline development processes at the local level, where review processes often impede the swift creation of new

housing. HAPO will provide essential technical assistance to local jurisdictions and tools to facilitate development, such as ready-build plans and model codes. It offers design and development flexibilities without compromising critical land use standards, a balanced approach crucial during our housing production and affordability crisis.

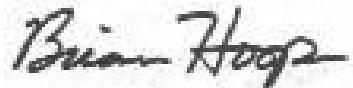
SB 1537 is a vital legislative opportunity to make substantial infrastructure investments, easing the development process and enabling more projects to come to fruition. The \$200 million housing infrastructure program is vital for cities, counties, tribes, and special districts to unlock new housing development. These funds are crucial for developing infrastructure that supports new housing, particularly for affordable housing projects often located on challenging parcels lacking basic amenities like water and sewer.

Additionally, the bill proposes financial assistance for low and moderate-income housing providers, aiding in land acquisition and site mitigation. While our members predominantly serve low income Oregonians, with a 2022 survey finding our members' rents are affordable at 42% average median income (AMI), we recognize the broader housing affordability issue stemming from heightened competition among higher-income households for limited housing. This competition not only drives displacement but also limits housing availability for lower-income households. By developing more moderate-income housing, we can alleviate this pressure and increase housing options for those at lower income levels.

SB 1537, while a compromise, is a critical step forward. The bill's refinement was the result of a seven-month collaborative process involving a diverse group of stakeholders, including affordable housing organizations like Housing Oregon, building officials, cities, conservation groups, agriculture groups, housing authorities, and developers. It should not be weakened by the pursuit of perfection, as it addresses the immediate need for increased housing production.

In conclusion, SB 1537 is a necessary legislative measure to address Oregon's housing crisis. Its passage will signify a major step forward in our collective effort to ensure adequate, affordable housing for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Brian Hoop
Executive Director
Housing Oregon