



Testimony of Jacquelyn Keogh, Executive Director of RootedHomes
In Support of SB1537
February 8, 2024

Re: Oral testimony submitted in written form, per request

RootedHomes is in support of SB1537 because it provides our entire state with the needed tools to build needed affordable and workforce housing in our community. First and foremost, we appreciate that it was developed in part with the Central Oregon community. I lead the non-profit RootedHomes, which builds affordable and sustainable homeownership communities in Deschutes, Crook, and Jefferson County. We serve households earning between 30-120% AMI. Last week alone we moved seven families into our newest community, of which a majority were St. Charles Hospital staff. Our local workforce are priced out of Central Oregon and SB 1537 would help us support our essential workers with needed affordable housing.

In Central Oregon, the lack of infrastructure funding delays the development of affordable housing by years. For example, we currently have 5 parcels of land representing 150 homes that we could develop into affordable housing if we had funds to bring infrastructure to the sites. SB1537 has dedicated \$200 million to establish a new housing infrastructure program that Central Oregon needs.

Separately, the climate provision of this bill would support our efforts to build sustainable communities and deepen affordability. We all know an affordable mortgage can become unaffordable when families are paying hundreds of dollars in utility bills each month. That's why RootedHomes builds net-zero homes where utility bills cap at \$12/month. SB1537 would support integration of these sustainable elements in more affordable housing.

Central Oregon is running out of affordable and buildable land. The land supply provision of SB1537 would support our private public partnerships with a one-time option for cities to bring land into their UGB with 30% of housing being affordable. We are currently working in the City of Redmond on a similar process and their UGB expansion will allow us to build 60 more homes on land that we otherwise would not have access to, integrating and prioritizing affordable housing into mixed-income areas.

Thank you for your consideration of SB1537 to support affordable housing state-wide.