

Submitter: Ben Asher
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing
Measure: HB4118

I'm writing to you to ask that the Committee vote NO on HB 4118 and the -1 amendment.

The original HB 4118 was well-intentioned — to provide more “workforce” housing. However, it unnecessarily pits two good things against one another: housing and farmland. HB 4118 provides that a private landowner may request that a city expand its urban growth boundary (UGB) into a city's urban reserve, by up to 100 acres for “workforce housing” and/or “workforce commercial” uses without going through the land use planning process. This would circumvent the public process by which urban reserves were designated; it would require cities to set up new, expensive structures to enforce “work force housing” restrictions; and it has unrealistic infrastructure provisions, among other things.

The -1 amendment would entirely replace HB 4118 with a new concept, which could have an even more widespread and adverse impact on UGBs. The -1 amendment is here.

The -1 amendment establishes the “Task Force on Barriers to Housing, Industrial and Manufacturing Development,” specifies the Task Force members, describes the issues the task force is to address, and requires a report to the Legislature by the end of 2022.

Here are just some of the significant problems with the -1 amendment:

The scope is much too broad to handle any one of the listed issues in an effective way. The scattershot of issues includes housing, manufacturing, industrial land, infrastructure, natural hazards, and more.

It describes a multitude of possible tools to be evaluated, each of which could also merit its own task force, including “state funding and tax abatement for infrastructure investments;” change to statutes and rules; urban growth boundaries; infrastructure for large-scale industrial uses; and more.

The task force membership is skewed towards landowners, developers, and local governments.

Certain task force “slots” are narrowly worded in ways that are clearly meant for specific interests to fill them, yet that is not transparent to the public.

The bill language indicates a bias for single-family housing zoning, an attempt to undermine middle housing and higher density housing, and a push towards expanding UGBs.

The task force lacks the expertise that one would bring together for any one of these issues.

Oregonians need more diverse and affordable housing in every neighborhood. And we need food producing-lands. It is time to call a halt to saying that to have more of one we must sacrifice the other. That's not the Oregon way — rather, we work together in good faith to find solutions. HB 4118 risks distracting all of us from taking real actions to increase diverse and affordable housing options where people need and want to live, inside UGBs — near work, school, shopping, and more. It is important for the Committee to hear that you are committed to working on meaningful housing solutions.