

Submitter: Philip Higgins
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4037

Dear Committee Members,

I urge immediate passage of HB 4037 to address Oregon's housing and homelessness emergency.

The crisis is not abstract—it's visible on our streets and felt in every working family struggling to afford rent or find any available housing. The root cause is clear: excessive local control and NIMBY opposition have created a patchwork of restrictive municipal codes that prioritize process over people and delay over delivery. Local control has become local obstruction, strangling housing production and creating artificial scarcity that drives up costs and pushes people into homelessness.

HB 4037 provides necessary intervention with essential tools to address these failures:

The Housing Accountability and Production Office's new enforcement authority creates necessary accountability for local governments that obstruct housing development. Too many municipalities have ignored state housing mandates while facing no consequences. That ends with this bill.

Streamlined plan review for smaller housing projects (1-2 units) removes bureaucratic barriers that make modest development financially unviable. A duplex shouldn't require months of review when bureaucratic process has become an end unto itself rather than a means to legitimate community protection.

Clear and objective standards protect both applicants and communities by replacing subjective, politically-motivated denials with transparent criteria. This ends the abuse of discretionary review to block housing based on aesthetics, politics, or neighbor complaints rather than genuine impacts. Communities retain protections; developers gain predictability.

Shorter review timelines for similar applications eliminate redundant processes that waste time and resources. If an application type has been approved before, redundant review serves only to delay and inflate costs.

Municipal codes designed to "preserve character" have instead preserved scarcity, driving up costs and pushing working families out of communities. Property owners' rights to develop housing on their own land have been severely handicapped by

layers of discretionary review that favor vocal opponents over broader community needs. Local control was supposed to serve communities. Instead, it has served homeowners who benefit from restricted supply at the expense of renters, young families, and workers.

The result is predictable: workforce housing shortages, homelessness, and declining livability for Oregonians who cannot afford artificially inflated housing costs.

We cannot solve this crisis by continuing the same failed approach. HB 4037 restores balance. It doesn't eliminate local input—it ensures that input doesn't become obstruction. It protects property rights while maintaining legitimate community standards. It represents necessary reform to restore housing production and begin addressing Oregon's emergency.

I urge you to pass HB 4037 and give Oregon the housing production tools we desperately need.

Thank you for your consideration.