

Submitter: Matt Tuckerbaum
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

My name is Matt Tuckerbaum and I am a homeowner in Inner Southeast Portland. As a member of Portland: Neighbors Welcome, I join my fellow pro-housing advocates in supporting House Bill 2138. I care deeply about the many pro-infill and middle housing components of this bill and the benefits it will provide as we collectively address our housing shortage.

I want to focus my testimony specifically on urging the committee to retain the language in SECTION 22. (1), which repeals the requirement for demolition review for houses which are listed as "contributing" in National Register Historic Districts (NRHDs). The existing State requirement for demolition review represents an enormous loophole in state land use law that allows a small group of homeowners to subvert the zoning decisions of their democratically-elected local government. By handing them the ability to define a whole district for "preservation," placing the burden of notarized opposition on 51% of affected landowners, and providing State requirement for demo review once the process is easily completed, this tool is easily abused. Without action today, this loophole will be used by more groups to exclude the housing we need as the pressure of our housing shortage grows.

I urge you to close this loophole and require historic preservation decisions to happen in a more democratic and accountable environment at the City level. Our elected representatives and City staff, taking the needs of all residents into account, should have the ability to make these decisions - not small groups of landowners. Our Cities need flexibility to address our ongoing housing crisis, and we should make the most of the strong tools this Bill provides them by closing the loophole that locks up large swathes of prime City land in NRHDs and prevents new diverse and affordable housing options within them. By standing firm on this issue, you can ensure that we have the opportunity to build housing that serves Oregonians of all ages, stages, and wages in every neighborhood.

Thank you.