



Senate Housing and Development Committee SB 51 with -1 & -2 amendments--Support

March 26, 2025

Bill Van Vliet, Executive Director
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing (NOAH)

Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the committee:

My name is Bill Van Vliet, Executive Director of NOAH, the Network for Oregon Affordable Housing. NOAH is a nonprofit lender that provides a wide range of loan programs for affordable housing projects throughout the state.

I'm here in support of SB 51 with both the -1 and -2 amendments.

For 15 years, NOAH convened the Oregon Housing Preservation Project, a public/private/philanthropic partnership to preserve affordable housing in Oregon. The project, with steady legislative investments, led to the preservation of over 20,000 affordable homes throughout the state, and that work continues today under the leadership of OHCS.

Over the years, NOAH came to understand that preservation is work that never ends, because every new project becomes tomorrow's preservation project.

The need for preservation resources and tools this session is large and stems from a combination of properties with expiring affordability restrictions and those facing severe operating challenges or physical distress.

Rapidly increasing expenses, such as insurance and utilities, have put those apartment communities at risk. In NOAH's portfolio, during the past five years operating expenses have grown twice as fast as revenues. That's unsustainable. Other funders report similar experiences, and it's not just limited to Oregon. This significant shift in the business environment has happened nationwide according to several publications.

While preserving and stabilizing affordable housing projects will require funding contained in other bills, SB 51 will codify a preservation framework and provide other equally important resources.

The relatively small investments in this bill will boost the industry's asset management and property management capabilities, key functions that will produce long term stability for properties and protect state investments.

Preservation funding is both essential and cost effective. It costs less to preserve an existing home than to replace it. Those investments need to be directly in the property and in strengthening the system for long term sustainability.

We can't make progress on the affordable housing shortage if we're losing affordable homes. Solving the housing crisis requires a "both/and" solution, preserve what we have while continuing to invest in new housing production.

I urge your support for SB 51.

Thank you.