



Advocating for a livable and sustainable  
Rogue Valley through responsible land use

February 8, 2021

Dear Members of the House Committee on Housing:

This testimony is submitted on behalf of Rogue Advocates, a land use planning advocacy organization based in Jackson and Josephine Counties.

Section 2 of HB 2708 begins with:

“Notwithstanding ORS 197.296 or 197A.320 or any statewide goal relating to housing or urbanization...”

This language, along with the remainder of this bill’s content, has the effect of setting aside Oregon’s land use laws relating to urban development. This bill - although purportedly an attempt to address a need for affordable housing - is an affront to Oregon’s planning legacy and a throwback to the shortsighted thinking that gave rise to it.

Land currently on the fringes of Oregon’s UGBs is not practically developed as “affordable.” It never has been and never will be. Such development requires a costly extension of infrastructure and urban services and is almost exclusively accessed by private auto. The bill would therefore force more Oregonians into a costly auto-dependent lifestyle in order to meet their need for housing. Development on the urban fringe, as promoted within this bill, will only hamper Oregon’s already weak efforts to address greenhouse gas emissions.

The undefined and ambiguous terms loading down this bill amount to a blank check. To give one example: Conceptual Plans. I have sat in a meeting with planners from around Jackson County when our local DLCD representative admitted that such plans - which were made a critical component of the Bear Creek Valley Regional Problem Solving (RPS) process in Jackson County - actually had no force of law. They are a fraud foisted on an unsuspecting public by those who want to eliminate responsible oversight while pretending to do otherwise.

Proponents of the 1950’s-era thinking behind this bill will likely expect Oregon taxpayers to not only suffer the diminished livability impacts of their distorted vision, but to pay for everything that makes it possible. This is socialism for developers. A trickle-down knife in the back for the rest of us.

Rather than burden Oregon’s taxpayers with the delusional dreams of their developer donors, the sponsors of this legislation would do better to articulate a comprehensive framework for their legislative goals. Or better yet, relocate themselves 900 miles south, where their visions of utopia are in full bloom.

I urge your committee to put this misguided, backwards legislation in a place where it cannot be resurrected.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Very sincerely,

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Rogue Advocates Land Use Program Manager

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