

February 7, 2024

To; Senate Committee on Housing and Development

RE; Measure: SB 1537

Committee Chair and Committee Members;

I would like to go on record in support of SB 1537.

Although I strongly support SB 1537, I don't think it goes nearly far enough to alleviate the shortage of housing in Oregon. The majority of those who oppose SB 1537 say that it undercuts or bypasses Oregon's land use laws which they tout as being successful. Clearly, anyone with reasonable common sense would have to come to the conclusion that Oregon's land use laws have been a dismal failure with regard to supporting the need for housing, unless you are one of the rabid antigrowth citizens who feel it's ok for them to live here and have a home, but no one else. We wouldn't be in the housing crisis we are now, if Oregon's land use laws were working.

I love living in Oregon, which is why I support ensuring there is a home to provide a roof over the head of every Oregonian. For this reason, I strongly urge you to pass SB 1537.

Solving Oregon's housing crisis is Oregonians' #1 priority for the legislature according to a January 2024 statewide poll of Oregonians conducted by American Strategies. That poll found that Oregonians believe there is too little housing for people with low incomes (81%), moderate incomes (76%) and too little single-family homes available to purchase (65%). Moreover, when forced to choose, 67% of Oregonians prioritize producing more affordable housing that meets the budgets and preferences of Oregonians over issues such as preserving open space and reducing carbon emissions.

SB 1537 - including the portions related to the optional, one-time expansion of urban growth boundaries (UGBs) - is a meaningful and essential step towards achieving our shared goal of addressing Oregon's housing crisis. Many cities in Oregon simply do not have enough land to support their housing need, and this bill provides an optional pathway to address the issue of land supply while still protecting farm, forest, and resource lands.

SB 1537 also ensures that at least 30% of the units produced in these optional UGB expansion areas is affordable to low- and moderate-income Oregonians. As any housing developer will tell you, it is usually less expensive to produce affordable housing on undeveloped land in our urban reserves.

Our system of government was intentionally designed to allow real imperfections in our laws to be addressed, not to affirm misconceptions that any law is perfect as written. Given that we are short 140,000 units needed to house our current population it is clear that action is necessary to achieve our shared goal of providing every Oregonian with a place to call home. SB 1537 is your chance to take meaningful action that achieves positive impacts.

Opponents of SB 1537 are attempting to undermine the bill after more than seven months of negotiations with Governor Kotek and her staff. Even after seven of their eight initial concerns were addressed in the bill, they chose to publicly mischaracterize SB 1537 as a "major threat" to Oregon. This mischaracterization is harmful and will only delay action needed to achieve Oregon's common goal of

addressing our housing crisis. The real threat to our state is a continued failure to fulfill Oregon's promise to provide an abundance of housing that is affordable for every Oregonian.

There is a way to create balance between the need for additional housing in Oregon and preserving the beauty and resources we enjoy. The imbalance that SB 100 signed into law in 1973 created cannot be ignored any longer. SB 1537 is a step in the right direction to correct that imbalance.

I urge you to stand with the vast majority of Oregonians in supporting SB 1537 so that we can ensure there is a roof over the head of every Oregonian.

Thank you.

Patrick Iler  
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