

March 17, 2025

**TO:** Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

**FR:** Duke Shepard, Oregon Business & Industry

**RE:** OBI Supports SB 6

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Chair Pham, Members of the Committee, my name is Duke Shepard, and I am a Senior Policy Director for Oregon Business and Industry.

OBI is a statewide association representing businesses across a wide variety of industries from all 36 of Oregon's counties. In addition to being the statewide chamber of commerce, OBI is the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation. Our 1,600 member companies, more than 75% of which are small businesses, employ over 250,000 Oregonians. Oregon's private-sector businesses drive a healthy, prosperous economy for the benefit of everyone.

I am testifying in support of SB 6, with the understanding that a -1 amendment is in process that focuses on housing, and I'll therefore address that anticipated amendment.

I'd like to share some insights from an article in *The Oregonian* published on February 27, 2025. It highlights the fact that average rents in Austin, Texas have dropped by 22% since August 2023, largely due to that city taking decisive action to address housing supply through process reforms and a focus on outcomes that benefit the broader community. You can read more about this here: [Oregonian Article](#).

The lack of available housing in Oregon is, in many ways, the result of policy decisions made over time. It's become increasingly clear that it's time to reassess and consider new approaches.

The consequences of unaffordable rents, limited homeownership opportunities, and underdeveloped lots are being felt by all Oregonians as they are effectively distributed to us all, as the policy choice costs land in our pockets.

These costs – whether in the form of higher rents, limited options, or delays in development – affect people across all income levels. Even those trying to build housing, including both private developers and nonprofits, are burdened by these challenges.

Addressing the issue of housing scarcity is ultimately a policy choice. We know this because other states and regions, such as Austin, have made different policy decisions and seen different results. This bill presents an opportunity to establish clear and objective standards, while also providing the speed and certainty that we need to move forward.

We are now in the third year of an officially declared homelessness emergency, and the Governor has set a target of building 36,000 units per year. However, it's clear that we are far from reaching this target, and in fact, construction job numbers have as reported by the state economist in the

last two revenue forecasts. This highlights the need to address the policy-driven challenges that are currently hindering our ability to increase housing supply.

Thank you for your time and efforts to fund solutions that benefit all Oregonians.