

Submitter: Kathleen Parker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Dear legislator,

Thank you for the work you do to represent Oregonians like me in our state capital.

As your constituent, I urge you to amend Oregon Senate Bill 1537 to remove the large Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) expansion in the bill. Making this change will protect affordability, clean air, and natural lands.

Our land use laws, including urban growth boundaries, ensure thoughtful development and efficient use of resources by making more compact, walkable towns and cities with diverse, accessible housing and transportation options, rather than endless sprawl that is not affordable, exacerbates climate change, and paves over natural areas, forests, and farmlands.

Expanding UGBs works against our shared goal of addressing the housing crisis. Spending limited infrastructure dollars goes further and faster inside UGBs to produce more housing than spending those dollars in a UGB expansion. Residential lands inside UGBs are often closer to existing infrastructure or already have some infrastructure in place but need just a bit more (such as a new sewer line). This means less cost and less time to add more housing than through a UGB expansion, which would require all-new infrastructure for all-new subdivisions.

"Building at the edge" would put more people into wildfire-prone areas that are far away from the services, stores, and jobs they need. Lengthy or nonexistent public transit options would force residents to drive private cars for long journeys to work, school, medical appointments, and more. This would lead to increased traffic congestion, carbon emissions, and air pollution. Clearing out trees and natural areas for new subdivisions would increase the already widespread problem of summer "heat islands" that are increasingly deadly and dangerous for Oregonians.

I agree with (12/4/22) Oregon Capital Chronicle article "Undoing urban growth boundary isn't the answer to our housing crisis." Published: Dec. 04, 2022  
<https://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/2022/12/opinion-undoing-urban-growth-boundary-isnt-the-answer-to-our-housing-crisis.html>  
By Guest Columnist | The Oregonian...Sam Diaz, Kim McCarty and Steve Messinetti

This aligns with 1.29.24 Open Letter - SB 1537 MT unless Amended from OLCV and the Oregon Conservation Network

I am also concerned about ensuring Oregon SB1537 effectively addresses the state's housing crisis and prioritizes citizens' access to homes:

- Eligibility restrictions: Limit funding eligibility to projects demonstrably serving Oregon citizens and prioritizing affordability.
- Transparency requirements: Mandate disclosure of funding sources and project beneficiaries to ensure accountability.
- Prioritization guidelines: Establish clear criteria for allocating funds, prioritizing projects with direct citizen access and long-term affordability.

I have read that a bill was introduced in both houses of Congress to ban hedge funds from buying and owning single-family homes in the United States. It would require that these funds sell off all the single-family homes they own over a 10-year period and would eventually bar them from owning any single-family homes at all. During the decade-long phaseout, the bill would impose stiff tax penalties, with the proceeds reserved for down-payment assistance for individuals and families looking to buy homes from corporate owners.

All over America, hedge funds (in the form of corporations, partnerships, and real estate investment trusts that manage funds pooled from investors) have bought up modestly priced houses, frequently in neighborhoods with large Black and Latino populations, and converted the properties to rentals. ~Robert Reich (Professor, writer, former US Secretary of Labor, author)

For all these reasons, and more, I urge you to stand with a majority of Oregonians, people like me, who want you to protect our land use laws. Please support amending SB 1537 by removing the large urban growth expansion.