



**Northwest
Housing
Alternatives**

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March 5, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Re: Testimony on SB 49

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee,

Northwest Housing Alternatives (NHA) is a 40-year-old nonprofit, mission-oriented, community-based housing organization with a portfolio of 2,600 affordable homes in 12 counties across Oregon. As a developer and owner of affordable housing, NHA supports the throughline goal of SB49 to bring more consistency to housing development planning and approvals across the state. Particularly, Section 4 will ensure local zoning regulations are upheld throughout the development process while still preserving discretionary review when appropriate.

Locally established review boards are one tool that communities have historically used to exclude new neighbors, especially people of color and people with low incomes. As a developer we see these boards continue to block development today, not by outright prohibiting new buildings but by making the processes and/or costs of development so burdensome as to prevent new multifamily housing, including Affordable Housing.

For example, NHA recently completed an adaptive reuse of a building in NW Portland listed on the historic register, though holding little historic value of its own. The project experienced a nearly 3-year delay due to the revisions required through multiple local reviews and appeals. NHA incurred nearly \$2 million to carry the project through this delay; we can imagine that in today's environment these costs would have been twice as high, if not more, just due to interest rates alone. These appeals were an explicit attempt to drain the project – and thus NHA as a nonprofit sponsor – of financial resources.

In the end the project was approved at two stories below the maximum height allowed in zoning (5 instead of 7). This significantly reduced the potential number of affordable housing units in the project. The design of the project was also not allowed to change to meet code updates, including energy code. In short, we spent significant time and nonprofit resources to build fewer housing units in a less energy efficient building than is allowed by code alone.

We know there is a critical need for affordable housing across Oregon. With greater transparency and consistency in housing project approvals, nonprofit developers like NHA can scale and locate new housing that both meets community needs and adheres to community guidelines.

Thank you for your dedication and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lydia M. Slocum".

Lydia Slocum, Senior Housing Developer