



**OREGON PROPERTY OWNERS
ASSOCIATION**

**Senate Committee on Housing
Testimony in Support of SB 1578**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments today in support of SB 1578. The Oregon Property Owners Association has represented Oregon property owners before the Legislature, local governments, state agencies and Oregon courts for nearly 40 years, with more than 12,000 contributors across the state, including all 36 Oregon counties.

SB 1578 authorizes 19 or Oregon's 36 counties to designate up to 50 acres each of rural land for the development of affordable rural housing for families who otherwise cannot afford to live in these rural counties or even find a home for rent.

If the bill were fully implemented, an unlikely event, approximately 950 of Oregon's 61,000,000 acres of land would be impacted. That's a tiny fraction of a tiny fraction of land, but the impact to young families in our rural counties would be significant.

The bill contains limits on both the density and size of the dwellings allowed under the bill. If the bill passes, counties could identify a handful of areas within the county where housing is most urgently needed and authorize construction of a small number of affordable houses in each area.

Each home is limited in size and thus guaranteed to be affordable to rent or own. As we've heard repeatedly for many years, one of the reasons that it's difficult for our rural counties to grow is the lack of available housing for people who would move to the area with a new employer. It's bad policy to force our rural counties to stay poor and be unable to attract new jobs and industries simply because they lack a housing base. SB 1578 addresses that in a small way.

The bill also allows a property that has been approved for a non-farm dwelling to have an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) as part of the non-farm dwelling. ADU's have become popular in recent years as a source of affordable rental stock or as a place where elderly Oregonians can age in place and not be forced to move into senior facilities because they can no longer care for their home.

SB 1578 would allow parcels that have already been found to contain soils so poor for farming that they qualify for a non-farm dwelling to add an ADU as an accessory to the main house. This is a modest but helpful change to the law. In our opinion, we should allow all Oregon property owners to have an ADU on their property. After all, all Oregon seniors should have the option of moving to an ADU on their property so they can age in place. There's a reason that ADU's are

commonly referred to as “granny flats”. Forcing an elderly widow to leave her farm to move to town because she can’t keep up with the home maintenance is cruel and should be universally rejected by all Oregonians with a heart and an ounce of empathy for the lives of their fellow citizens.

For these reasons, we strongly urge members of the Committee to vote YES on SB 1578.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit these comments. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Contact: dhunnicutt@oregonpropertyowners.org