

Southern Oregon Climate Action Now



Confronting Climate Change

<https://socan.eco>

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Reference Bill Number SB1537

Chair Jama and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development:

I write as cofacilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, an organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians who are concerned about the climate crisis and encourage state action to address it. As rural Oregonians, we live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to produce. Because of this, we pay close attention to what is happening in Salem in terms of legislative proposals.

In addition to being concerned about the climate crisis, we are also acutely aware of the housing crisis and certainly support efforts to address that serious human problem. For this reason, we were intrigued by the efforts presented in SB1537 to address the housing crisis. While we support much of what is contained in the bill, particularly the assistance provided to developers in planning and developing affordable housing, we have grave concerns about the component that makes expanding the Urban Growth Boundaries of cities much easier.

Our first suggestion is that, rather than adjusting the rules to allow urban expansion to meet the legitimate affordable housing needs the state experiences, greater effort might be expended to encourage taking advantage of the many acres of residentially zoned land within cities that remain undeveloped.

If Urban Growth Boundary expansion is permitted, while we acknowledge the statement offered in the Governor's one- (three-) pager that the requirement for 30% of the housing to be affordable constitutes a substantial improvement over the 10 – 20% required in many other jurisdictions, we also find this to be a desperately small percentage of the homes. Given the inclusion of so many mechanisms that provide assistance to developers, we urge that this value be much higher in order far better to achieve the goal of providing affordable housing established for the proposal.

As a climate organization, we are also very mindful of the climate impacts of residential developments that increase the need for energy, infrastructure, and resources. We appreciate

efforts to conform these developments with the principles of the Climate Friendly and Equitable Communities concept but suggest that this presents a tremendous opportunity to do more. In particular, we suggest that residential development within the newly expanded boundaries should be all-electric (e.g., Rewiring America undated) which is cheaper than providing dual gas and electricity energy sources. New construction should be at least solar-ready (Holm 2017) if not solar-installed while also incorporate energy efficient appliances since these save energy and money (e.g., Safdie 2024, Vista 2024), and constructed to meet energy efficient guidelines while also employing fire resistant materials (e.g., Planhub 2023; Utilities One 2023) and firewise landscaping (e.g., Alexander 2022; Lovechio 2023)

For these reasons, we find the UGB component to be flawed and urge amendment to modify that element by either reducing the acreage or increasing the requirement for more energy efficient fire-resistant homes.

Respectfully Submitted



Alan Journet

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