



February 8, 2024

Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Oregon Street Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson and Committee members,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,600 members and 8,500 businesses in Central Oregon, we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments in support of SB 1537. Over the past three years the Bend Chamber has invested significant time and resources to help alleviate our current housing crisis – from policy work, to public education and employer investment in workforce housing.

In our October 2022 employer survey conducted by ECONorthwest, 91 percent of the over 200 Central Oregon businesses stated the high cost of housing limits their growth and strains their existing workforce. This is why workforce housing is our top initiative and why SB 1537 is so essential to the future of our state.

We support the bill's targeted tools to remove barriers to housing development, including a \$500 million investment package to unlock more housing production. We also support the revolving loan fund that will help bridge the gap in badly needed midmarket housing for our workforce. And by allowing for modest and reasonable expansions of urban growth boundaries, qualifying communities will have a new tool to help address our state's severe underproduction and their residents find affordable housing.

We do, however, urge the committee to consider additional language on one-time UGB expansion to further define development ready lands and allow flexibility for communities like Bend to utilize this tool to add much needed housing lands to their UGBs. Finally, we support a Housing Accountability and Production Office to assist both jurisdictions and developers. We recommend additional stakeholder engagement with the HAPO and would recommend an advisory committee or another mechanism to increase perspective and input.

We urge a yes vote on SB 1537 and thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katy Brooks".

Katy Brooks
President & CEO
Bend Chamber of Commerce