

Submitter: Robert Hemphill
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

My name is Robert Hemphill and I live in the Hillsdale neighborhood of Portland, OR. First, I want to say that I am very disappointed that remote testimony was not taken at today's committee. I took an hour off of work to participate, and then was told that despite signing up, I would not get an opportunity to address the committee. This feels greatly unfair, inequitable, and inaccessible.

I join Portland: Neighbors Welcome in supporting House Bill 2138, which will positively affect Oregon's housing shortage by legalizing more housing across the state with land already available in our cities and towns and cutting red tape that prevents working families from choosing homes that allow them to live affordably in their own communities. This bill will help people live near jobs that invest in their community, create opportunities for more people who want to become homeowners, allow more people to stay in their communities as they age, and make use of vacant lots to help neighborhoods be vibrant.

I also specifically urge the committee to retain the language in SECTION 22. (1), which repeals the requirement for demolition review for houses which are listed as "contributing" in National Register Historic Districts. Undemocratic and landowner-controlled National Register of Historic Places districts are distinct from local historic districts that have democratic oversight from a body — the city council — that is legally allowed to consider any factors other than historic preservation, and can consider the interests of tenants as well as landowners. This bill retains Oregon cities' ability to preserve historical resources and does not impact local historic districts, but grants cities the flexibility they need to address our ongoing housing crisis and ensure that we can build housing for Oregonians of all ages, wages, and stages of life.

I am a person who greatly desires living in middle housing. Further, despite making an above average wage, I find housing costs to be prohibitively high. We need more housing options, which is what the bill provides for. But I want to specifically call out the opposition, specifically around the historic districts aspect. Our housing shortage needs to be borne by every neighborhood. No neighborhood should be able to preserve themselves in amber. These historic districts once changed from greenfield to housing - many gained duplexes and more during WWII. Cities are dynamic and changing, and bowing to an undemocratic process around historic districts

exacerbates inequities and makes housing affordability harder for us to achieve.

Thank you.