

Garrett West
Medford City Council
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Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Attn: Chair Senator Khanh Pham
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

**Re: Medford City Council Member's Opposition to SB 49 –
Preserving Local Control and Smart Growth Planning**

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee,

As a member of the Medford City Council, I am deeply concerned about SB 49 and the disruptive impact it would have on land use planning, housing development, and local decision-making across Oregon. While I appreciate efforts to increase housing supply, this bill takes a one-size-fits-all approach that undermines decades of thoughtful planning at the local level.

One of the most problematic aspects of SB 49 is its elimination of local discretion in setting residential density requirements. Southern Oregon cities, including Medford, have spent years carefully balancing housing needs with infrastructure capacity through regional collaboration. Our Regional Problem-Solving Plan (RPS) was designed to ensure sustainable growth, requiring specific minimum densities for urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions while allowing cities to plan for infrastructure and service needs. By overriding local density policies, SB 49 would upend this multi-decade effort and create inconsistencies in how Southern Oregon cities grow.

Additionally, SB 49's sweeping pre-emptions on local land use authority ignore the realities cities face in providing essential infrastructure, such as roads, water, and wastewater services. Housing development cannot happen in isolation—it requires coordinated planning to ensure communities remain livable and functional. Stripping cities of their ability to make density-related decisions will not speed up housing production; it will instead lead to inefficient development, infrastructure strain, and unintended economic consequences.

Moreover, the bill imposes unnecessary state mandates on zoning and density without addressing the actual barriers to housing production—such as

infrastructure funding, permitting efficiency, and development costs. If the Legislature wants to support housing, it should focus on providing resources for infrastructure development, streamlining permitting, and incentivizing affordable housing construction rather than overriding local governments' ability to manage their own growth.

One meaningful way to improve efficiency without sacrificing local control is to make permitting timelines more transparent. I encourage the Legislature to establish public reporting on how long it takes individual jurisdictions to approve different types of development applications—like the City of Bend does. This data would allow for an objective comparison of which cities are efficient, and which may need to improve their processes. By identifying bottlenecks, we can take targeted steps to reduce delays without sacrificing public input or thoughtful planning.

Southern Oregon cities have spent decades working collaboratively on smart growth strategies that reflect the unique needs of our region. SB 49 would disrupt these efforts and impose a top-down approach that fails to account for local realities. I urge you to oppose this bill and instead support policies that empower cities to build housing in ways that are sustainable, efficient, and aligned with long-term community planning goals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Garrett West
Medford City Council