



March 30, 2021

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Capital
Salem, OR

RE: SB408 – Testimony in opposition in current form

Dear Committee Members,

Restore Oregon is a statewide non-profit working to save places that matter. We promote the restoration and reuse of older homes and buildings as a means to preserve Oregon's diverse cultural heritage and to help solve problems like affordable housing, rural economic development, and climate change. The greenest building – and the most affordable home – is already standing.

There are many aspects of SB458 that give cause for concern, not the least of which is the lack of data to support its premise of increased affordability, and the stripping away of local land use control. However, our testimony will focus on an easily predictable consequence of the bill. Because more money will be made by demolishing homes and replacing them with multiple individually owned units, this bill creates a major incentive to demolish perfectly useable housing stock. The ensuing carbon emissions from this demolition and new construction will set back achievement of Oregon's emission reduction goals by a not-insignificant amount.

Recently Restore Oregon enlisted independent research firm ECONorthwest to evaluate and quantify the environmental impact of demolition. The results were eye-opening and should motivate state and local policy-makers to incentivize building reuse and strive for density without demolition.

They crunched the numbers from multiple studies to estimate the average CO₂ emission reductions realized by renovating existing structures rather than demolishing and replacing them. We assumed replacement buildings would be twice the size of their predecessors – a conservative assumption.

According to ECONorthwest's calculations, renovating a 1,500 SF older home reduces embedded CO₂ emissions by 126 metric tons, versus tearing down the same structure and replacing it with a 3,000 SF residential building. That equates to roughly 44,048 gallons of gasoline emissions. According to the *Monthly Energy Review* published by the U.S. Energy Information Service, the average American car uses 474 gallons of gasoline per year. **Thus, renovating an older home, rather than demolishing and replacing it, equates to removing 93 cars from the road for an entire year.**

That is just one home. Multiply this statewide and ask what additional conservation will be required to make up for this avoidable set-back.

As we seek ways to increase the supply of 'middle' and affordable housing, it would be wise to start with the reuse of what we already have. We should never reward demolition, but SB458 appears poised to do just that.

Sincerely,



Peggy Moretti
Executive Director

Attachment: