



March 29, 2023

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair  
Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
Oregon State Legislature  
Salem Oregon

submitted electronically via OLIS

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Fire Chiefs Association (OFCA) and the Oregon State Firefighters Council (OSFFC) support the broad policy goals of SB 847 which strives to increase housing capacity in our state. As first responders, we see every day the impacts of inadequate supply of housing in our communities. However, as first responders whose priority is fire and life safety, we have concerns with some provisions of the -18 amendment, which could compromise the health and safety of Oregonians and our emergency first responders.

**Specific concerns include:**

1. Providing a single exit for multi-story, multi-family occupancies place residents and firefighters at risk when a fire occurs. Firefighters trying to access a fire, or conduct a rescue in a multi-story building, will be slowed while using a stairwell crowded with people trying to evacuate.
2. This amendment as drafted would allow a bypass of the formal fire and building code adoption process. The Building Codes Structures Board functions as part of the Department of Consumer and Business Services in administering the structural program. The Board includes a building official, general contractor, utility supplier, architect, building trades, commercial building owner, fire protection agency, representative of the Oregon Disabilities Commission and a contractor specializing in heavy industry. This Board provides the technical input necessary to prioritize safety in building.
3. The Oregon Structural Specialty Code and the International Building Code currently limit the number of stories served by a single exit stairway to three stories. These restrictions are based on the best science and historical fire loss. The -18 amendment would allow those limits to be bypassed which increases the possibility of loss during an emergency.
4. Many Oregon fire departments lack the personnel and equipment that could be required to effectively combat a fire and safely evacuate large numbers of occupants from multi-story buildings. Built in fire protection and egress features are critical to the safety of Oregonians



living in these buildings. By bypassing those features as stated in the -18 amendment, the safety not only of residents but also first responders in an emergency is compromised.

The OFCA and OSFFC look forward to working with the Committee and bill to identify solutions to meet the broad policy goals of increasing housing while maintaining the safety of Oregonians and our first responders.

Thank you for your consideration.

Chief Roger Johnson  
Legislative Chair, Oregon Fire Chiefs Association  
Chief, Sisters Camp Sherman Fire

Karl Koenig  
President, Oregon State Fire Fighters Council