

Submitter: Lauren Clark
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure: SB976

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Boquist, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today in support of SB 976. My name is Lauren Clark and I'm a realtor and managing broker at Neighbors Realty in Portland, OR. I urge your support for this important piece of legislation to rein in wasteful aspects of our tax code and to make meaningful investments in our ongoing housing crisis.

As a realtor who mostly represents young (and not so young) first time home buyers I see over and over again how hard it is for folks to break into Oregon real estate markets. Many first time homebuyers are working with very small down payments, and find it nearly impossible to compete with downsizing older buyers, investors and people coming from more expensive areas with lots of cash reserves. The average age of first time homebuyer in America is now 36 years old as of 2022, that's up 3 years from just 2021 when it was 33. Many of the first time homebuyers I work with already have growing families and are over a decade or more into their careers and cannot compete on properties that barely even meet their needs. Furthermore, only 26% of homebuyers were first time homebuyers in 2022, the smallest number since NAR began recording this data. If we don't act to bring more equity to housing in Oregon, the number of first time homebuyers could continue to shrink, trapping people in a rental market where housing costs weigh even more heavily compared to homeowners, and preventing them from building the generational wealth their families deserve. Though SB 976 will not solve the housing crisis in Oregon, it's imperative that we take this action to help with housing equity.

While it's true that the MID will benefit first time homebuyers once they own a home, it is providing a far greater benefit to the wealthiest Oregonians, as an audit by the Oregon Secretary of State last year found that "roughly 18,000 taxpayers with incomes in the top 1% . . . received more benefit from the MID than the 727,000 taxpayers in the bottom 40% combined."

When so many families across Oregon are struggling with housing instability, it is unconscionable that we continue to subsidize families who are in no need of support from the state. SB 976 is a common-sense piece of legislation that would ensure our tax code works for all Oregonians, not just the most wealthy among us.