

HB 2001 Testimony

Good afternoon Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today, and thank you to Speaker Kotek for your leadership on this issue.

It has been over 10 years since the start of the Great Recession, and we now know that the housing crisis it caused is *not* a flash in the pan, nor is it concentrated to one or two cities in a single region.

The crisis has engulfed communities throughout Oregon with little concern for county lines, and we know it's not going away anytime soon.

It has become an ongoing emergency without end, and it all comes down to a simple math problem: there is not enough housing for everyone who lives here.

The bill before you today would go a long way to solving that problem.

It is the regulatory fix that every county in Oregon needs because after ten years, it is plain to see that the market isn't going to correct it for us.

According to a recent EcoNorthwest report, there are currently 56,000 households at risk of homelessness in Portland metro area because they can't make ends meet. That's 56,000 on any given day, on any given night.

People are working full-time and they're putting in extra shifts just to pay rent so that they can avoid homelessness, but it only takes a flat tire, or a minor health issue for the ground to be pulled from under you.

(i) The story of somebody living in a tent, going to work in the morning and coming home at night to that *same tent* is no longer the exception.

(ii) Families sleeping in cars, with children going to school and coming back to that *same car* for dinner is no longer the exception.

Local governments have the tools to treat, but not to cure.

We can provide rent assistance and case management. We can even build thousands of affordable housing units, but without strong statewide regulatory changes, counties and cities alone cannot address the root cause of the challenge before us.

And let's quickly define that challenge. Because *unlike* a lot of land use policy it isn't especially complex or wonky. So let's break it down: Oregon is a great state to live in; a lot of people keep moving here; we don't have enough housing for them, so the cost of housing skyrockets.

HB 2001 addresses this challenge head on by allowing more homes to be built in highly restrictive neighborhoods. And I support its passage.

I am lucky enough to live in a single-family home, in one of those neighborhoods. And yes, I understand the impulse to preserve it, but it is time to accept that single-family zoning is a thing of the past.

Because restricting where people can live by virtue of their income has never been okay, and it shouldn't be okay now.

It is the time to look forward to the future so that others have access to the same great things about my neighborhood as my family and I do.

And make no mistake, this issue is especially critical for communities of color, because as disparities grow in the housing market, homeownership becomes more ever-more unattainable. That means if we continue on the same track, single-family zoned neighborhoods throughout Oregon will become invisible gated communities of privileged white families. It's already happening, and it has to stop.

The market's job is to make money; it's our job to guard against its excesses. Right now, after ten years, this housing crisis is no longer an excess, it's an indulgence. Together, we can correct for that.

That's what the bill before you is designed to do.

HB 2001 addresses the root cause of this housing crisis: the shortage of housing. Thank you, Speaker Kotek. I know it will make an enormous difference for families across the state, but also to the future and health of Oregon.

Thank you.