

February 7, 2018

To Whom it May Concern;

Please consider opposing HB4086 as currently written.

We prefer the FIX to amend HB4086 to only fix the specialized inspector certification.

The fix proposed in 2017 by our companies in House Bill 2907 was clearly written to bring back fairness to the certification rules for third party providers like NWCP in using existing or obtaining our specialized inspector certifications. The bill needs to be amended to address this simple issue and to fix that language only.

Oregon Building Codes Division Director, Mark Long's letter from Oregon Building Codes Division dated 1/12/18 sent a letter to the House Committee on Business and Labor, in this letter he stated clearly that this was not aware of any legal or policy issues. He stated, "We are not aware of any legal or policy issue related to the intent of HB2907 to allow employees of a third-party employees to use specialized "light commercial" inspector certifications. If the AG has no issue, BCD has no issue then let's make this critical fix now and work on other alleged issues where time permits next session in order to avoid dangerous unintended consequences.

Companies like Northwest Code Professionals have been in business for more than 43 years and have provided a valuable and affordable solution in partnering with government to keep community development moving forward.

As an employee of a third-party building services provider, tasked with similar duties as "Permit Technician", I am trained to know the building code, as well as Oregon Statutes and Administrative rules regarding duties I participate in. Our entire company is tasked with having and maintaining the same certifications as every other jurisdiction and municipality, along with additional certifications to ensure we are well versed in our ethical responsibilities and duties to perform these services with our cities fully within the law.

Currently I am taking the next step and getting my State Certification for Residential Structural and Mechanical Inspector and Plan Review certification. To participate in this field, I take state run classes, and will then be required to take another specialized test that tells the state I know and fully understand the Oregon Statutes and Administrative rules as they pertain to the Building Codes Division. To maximize potential and streamline inspections, my goal is to add residential electrical and plumbing onto my certification target goals. This will allow one person (me) to tackle several fields of inspections knowledge, to keep the construction industry moving as efficiently as possible. If it were YOUR house being built, would you like your contractor to take a 4 day break while inspectors of different knowledge and certification make their way to your jobsite? Or would a "One-Stop Shop" be more appealing?

As an employee, I value the fact that we maintain certifications, develop valuable resources and networks within this highly trained field. We can take care of our cities with efficiency and without the added headache of "politics" getting in our way. We get to show up, participate efficiently and effectively, and be able to provide our cities and our FAMILIES the best of who we can be.

All the while our cities do not need to worry about stripping their budgets of other much needed services to pay additional staff of Building Officials, inspectors of varying levels, and plan examiners the highly competitive wages, and benefits. Private businesses have found ways to enhance and streamline without creating undue hardships on their cities, because it is all for the development of the business and the staff, while assisting cities who would otherwise be unable to do it themselves. Allowing local governments to contract for specialized building inspectors is good policy, which has been fully explored and vetted by the committee and the workgroup. We ask to legislature to move forward only with language that addresses this issue.

There have been many times we receive a call for help when a B.O. has retired, many counties have requested our help to cover gaps in their staffing, so they can maintain their level of turn-around time to fill inspection and plan review requests. Due to the 2008 downturn, lost large swaths of the building department staff, where those laid off found other careers to keep their families fed. There is a shortage within this state to fill current hiring levels in all phases of the Building Department. We help fill that void.

We operate and cooperate with all our cities. Most of the team comes with decades of history working for jurisdictions and municipalities. We have a great relationship with the staff of all our jurisdictions. We must follow the same rules, regulations and certifications responsibilities as all other cities within the state. We appreciate the fact that the level of care and professionalism in handling customer service exceeds most other cities throughout the state, since we WANT to make every person, whether it be a contractor, homeowner, or city employee feel they are getting the very best of who we are. We treat every request with care and are proud that we give unbiased assistance and guidance to every person we meet. For us it is about customer service. We value the time of our clientele. Time is money.

Please support our efforts to allow contracting for specialized inspectors. Please help our businesses and our clients and oppose other changes in HB 4086 until the legislature fully understands the current system, need for any changes and ramifications of such proposals. We are committed to continuing to provide our expertise to the workgroup during the 2018 interim.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michele Linbarger

Permit Technician, Northwest Code Professionals