

Committee Members, other Legislators:

I submit this testimony in opposition to HB 2001 as presently drafted. First, on a wider perspective, the intent of this legislation goes beyond the appropriate role of state regulation. The concept of zoning is inherently local, based on specific circumstances, characteristics, and policy preferences of individual cities. As such, determining local policies and procedures is better left to locally-elected officials and should not be within the purview of state legislators, many of whom represent other, widely differing parts of Oregon.

More specifically, HB 2001's restrictions on certain provisions of local single-family zoning will not improve the situation it presumes to address. This presumed 'crisis' is a shortage of housing and especially affordable housing. Housing shortages are fundamentally a matter of current supply not meeting current demand; i.e., a short-term market imbalance. Portland's recent surge in housing construction, mostly rental units, in a reasonable time will bring these market factors into approximate equilibrium. Likewise, housing supply in other cities will increase in response to increased demand. These market adjustments are not immediate, but inevitable. Under existing local policies and zoning rules, this new housing will be created mostly in multi-family and commercial zones that are well served by civic infrastructure and transit services.

Regarding affordability, as my neighborhood land use chairperson for several years I have witnessed an alarming and markedly consistent trend. That is, the demolition of my community's older and smaller houses, one at a time, to be replaced by new, always larger construction. Portland's existing "single-family" zones already allow multi-family projects on some lots, so these are built where possible; despite their greater density, they are never inexpensive. Where only a single-family house is allowed, in every case this has been a larger and much costlier house than the one demolished. My experience indicates that increased density does not guarantee affordability, but actually has the opposite effect. Numerous studies of real-world results in other U.S. cities have verified this conclusion.

HB 2001 would essentially eliminate single-family zoning in Portland and many other Oregon cities. It presumes that state government possesses greater wisdom and better judgment than local leaders. They, not state legislators, are best situated and informed about their diverse communities and should be the ones to determine the neighborhood characteristics desired by their constituents. Bottom line, HB 2001 will not increase housing supply or affordability and will inappropriately preempt local decision-making. I urge you not to advance this flawed bill.

Respectfully,

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