



**Testimony before the Human Services and Housing Committee in Support of HB2001, by Maui Meyer, Hood River.**

Chair Keny-Guyer, members of the Human Services and Housing Committee,

My name is Maui Meyer, from Hood River. I write in support of HB2001 before you today.

I'm a Realtor, Developer, former County Commissioner, and member of the North Central Regional Solutions Team.

My domain is housing, and housing affordability in Rural Oregon, particularly, The Gorge.

I own a Real Estate brokerage in the Gorge, and as a top producer in the market, I'm with clients all day, and have been, for well over 20 years. I've got a good feel for the current status on the ground in one of the least affordable housing markets in Oregon.

I also sit on the North Central RST board, and our region's #1 priority is the housing affordability crisis, and it has been since approximately 2012, when we started.

I believe that many of you have been around and read about or are living the issue of housing affordability in Oregon. In past sessions, along with plenty of meetings at the local and state level, good work has occurred, but as anyone who has been around the issue will tell you, the measures appear to be perhaps too specific, can't be deployed at scale, and have left us falling behind.

This is why HB2001 makes sense for Oregon now. HB2001 "flips the script" on the way we look at our communities, creating the possibility of the proper type and mix of housing first, and by default; a pathway towards long term community success by default. (Which I define as, housing of different types, for different socio-economic groups, as a rule) and then, through local planning efforts, ANY local community can decide to modify.

This is an idea whose time has come. On the ground, there is not a community member, or Realtor, in fact that I've spoken to, that once they understand the issue don't stop and say. "Wow, that's a game changer, and that's' the type of move Oregon needs to make."

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In fact, this bill couldn't have arrived a moment too soon. Other states and cities are allowing density by default, and have made their communities more attractive, more economically competitive, than Oregon. They are now luring away the next generation's workforce with a supply of "missing middle" housing.

In the past six months, I've had two seller leads tell me they were moving away from Hood River and to the Midwest. To summate their opinion, "Houses are cheaper, jobs pay the same." That's a chilling indictment of our current zoning, which simply failed these contributing members of our community, because, currently, the default housing type costs, on average, over \$480,000. We simply can't continue on with land prices at these levels, and pretend that we are representing the entirety of communities needs. We simply aren't anymore. It's provable by almost any metric, that single family zoning thought process is hollowing out our communities and eviscerating our long term viability. We have a tough time in Rural Oregon as it is. This outdated planning mindset only makes it harder.

There are some who would argue "local communities can complete these types planning processes if only the State gave them more funds for planning, and more flexibility." As a commissioner with 12 years experience, one who has sat on the other side of the table for countless meetings about issues like this, I can tell you that the tough decision will never get made in that local environment. If, by some chance that does occur, it would be a rare event indeed, but not a replicable model for Oregon, and it's myriad of governing styles and community nuance. Opponents, who promote some rare, and admirable, successes, certainly have not seen other Oregon communities. The majority of Oregon communities cannot navigate to single family zoning reform. However, when placed upon that platform via HB2001, they can then have meaningful discussions about density, and how to manage it, knowing that it's part of the default condition, and not a planning exception.

Others will contend that this bill "doubles density" and will create some sort of havoc within our communities, and undue strain on our infrastructure. While I understand the notes of caution, and certainly support professional planning, I can state with a pretty high degree of accuracy, from experience, that this would lead to somewhere between 20-30% more density, not 100%. Why do I know this? Because a few years back, we modeled a couple of neighborhoods in Hood River using setbacks, and other existing parameters, and pretty quickly found out, that there aren't as many units that you could put in as one might think. This is where we got the 20-30% number. And that was optimistic. Lowering parameters might certainly induce more units to be built, but THIS is a question for a local community.

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Other valid issues, as brought up by some commentary, include that the theoretical number of units counting towards adequate housing Inventories will obviate the need for UGB expansion. In Hood River's instance, I would say that's a good thing, but other cities have other issues, and I appreciate that our issues are not Portland Metros. I am also sure that there can be updating of our land use system to take into account the "theoretical" number units in inventory, vs. the "actual" once we have some experience with it. This is a similar idea to the Hood River experience where the use of the home was counted, and not just the housing type, which then indicated we were overusing our inventory for things like short term rentals and dark homes, causing Hood River to enact sensible restrictions on short term rentals, and give us a more accurate, usable inventory.

But these critiques belie the basic fact that HB2001 returns housing zoning to the actual people in the economy that make the economy the most successful, the working class and young workers, our next generation of workforce, whom we are losing at a truly alarming rate.

As was mentioned in one of our coffee shop debates this week.... "The goal of planning in general here SHOULD be to plan for EVERYONE first, then enact reasonable restrictions for everyone, not just preserve a format for those who can afford a \$500,000 home, which is how we are currently doing it....." (As a side commentary, less than 20% of Hood River's population can afford a \$500,000 home. In fact approximately 80% of the population can only afford the median home, using common purchase, earning and lending ratios.)

As a community member, I strongly support allowing a thriving working class in Hood River. We are a community that honors and values all participants. If they work in this community, they have a right to live in this community. Full stop.

HB2001 would do more than anything else passed in the last number of sessions to secure Hood River, and Oregon's long-term viability, in a sustainable and equitable manner. It is time to make this bold move.

Thank you for reading.

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