



METRO COUNCIL PRESIDENT TOM HUGHES

March 6, 2013

Rep. Carolyn Tomei, Chair
House Human Services and Housing Committee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for HB 2639

Dear Chair Tomei and Members of the Committee:

Metro supports policies to increase housing choices throughout the Portland metropolitan region so that families of modest means are not forced to live concentrated in a few neighborhoods, and to effectively reduce the number of households paying more than 50 percent of their incomes on housing and transportation (“cost-burdened households”).

In 2008, Metro and its regional partners adopted a set of six desired outcomes that characterize successful communities. Among these outcomes are that people have the ability to live in vibrant communities where they have easy access to everyday needs and that the benefits and burdens of growth are shared equitably.

However, market forces and the prevalence of affordable housing investments in low-income neighborhoods continue to contribute to concentrations of poverty and a shortage of affordable housing that frustrate the ability to achieve these outcomes. The lack of affordable housing in many areas of the region affects people of all income levels: while stifling opportunity for those already at a disadvantage, it also restrains our entire region's economic growth.

The Federal Housing Choice Voucher program (also known as Section 8) was developed, in part, to reduce concentrations of poverty by providing a rental voucher a tenant can use anywhere in the rental market. However, because tenancy can be denied based on the receipt of housing choice vouchers or other forms of rental assistance, there are still too few places around the region where vouchers can be used.

HB 2639 would effectively remove barriers for tenants using the current Section 8 program, which would open up the availability of housing options in town and regional centers, key transportation corridors and other areas well-served with public services. This would offer the region's most vulnerable populations the opportunity to live closer to the jobs and services they depend upon.

For these reasons, the Metro Council supports HB 2639 as a means to achieve more equitable access to affordable housing throughout the Portland metropolitan region. We urge you to support this important legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tom Hughes".

Tom Hughes
Metro Council President