



Deborah Kafoury Multnomah County Chair

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Testimony of Chair Deborah Kafoury

Good afternoon, Chair Keny-Guyer and members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing.

I am here today in support of HB 2564, which would give local communities the ability to create housing opportunities for all types of households through the use of inclusionary zoning in our land use planning.

Despite an unprecedented boom in multi-family housing development during the past few years, Multnomah County is facing a critical shortage of affordable housing. Rising rents and a lack of affordable units has meant that families of color and low-income households have moved to East Portland and East Multnomah County to find housing. Without the ability to encourage mixed-income housing in all neighborhoods, low-income families are forced to live in areas with poor access to transportation, employment, parks and grocery stores.

As Chair of a county government that provides services for the elderly, disabled and low income families, I hear on a daily basis how difficult it is to find housing for our clients. Aging and Disability staff can't move clients out of nursing homes they cannot find affordable, accessible housing. Our county staff who work with developmentally disabled residents have had to place people in Columbia County because they could not find affordable housing – even with rental assistance - in Multnomah County.

More than half of all households that do find housing are rent burdened, meaning they pay more than 30 percent of their incomes on rent alone. Families of color are rent burdened at an even higher rate – 57 percent of these households pay more than 30 percent of their incomes on rent and therefore cannot meet the needs of their families and are at risk of becoming homeless.

Multnomah County has joined with the cities of Portland and Gresham, Home Forward and the Meyer Memorial Trust to create a shared governance plan to address homelessness in our community. We are aligning our policies and resources to achieve the best outcomes for the most vulnerable people in our county. However, the biggest obstacle we face is the lack of affordable housing for low income households.

Public subsidies and voluntary incentives alone cannot overcome this shortage. We need the private sector to partner in our community efforts to develop solutions to the affordable housing crisis – not just in Multnomah County, but in Central Oregon, along the coast, and in rural communities throughout the state.

Inclusionary zoning is a practical, flexible tool that has been used in urban, suburban and rural communities around the country. The time has come for the Oregon Legislature to allow Oregon communities the ability to craft local solutions through all available planning tools - including inclusionary zoning.

I urge your support for HB 2564.