



Washington County Citizen Action Network

To: Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee on Human Services & Housing

From:

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- **Washington County Citizen Action Network**
- **Washington County Interfaith Committee on Homelessness**

Testimony in FAVOR of HB 2564

Advocates for vulnerable Oregonians feel that inclusionary zoning is one way to help ensure that neighborhoods such as the ones around Portland's Southeast Division Street grow and don't become too pricey for working-class residents.

Dondero: This is not a Portland centric problem, it also is a challenge in Washington County too where high land values require building on small lots, building vertically and/or allowing residential units to be built in commercially zoned areas.

Such infill building is a "smart growth" strategy which allows housing to be adjacent to services low income people need access to – grocery stores, medical services, schools and other retail outlets. It also encourages walking or the use of public transit.

The state pre-emption on inclusionary zoning harms the working poor and with red lining creates racially/income segregated neighborhoods.

Lifting Oregon's ban on [inclusionary zoning](#) is a critical step in preventing gentrification and financial segregation.

Dondero: The people in need are "poor" Oregonians including 1 in 4 children who grow up in poverty in Oregon. It includes the

chronically homeless and those who lost their homes to foreclosure before and after the Great Recession. It includes people who suffer from hunger, unemployment and/or low wage jobs.

The best barometer of whom we are talking about is the 600,000 Oregonians who had no chance of health insurance until the Affordable Care Act came along. The latest math is that number has grown to 789,000 Oregonians covered by the ACA.

Oregonians at risk include families with children, victims of spouse abuse, the elderly, the working poor, vets and people living on fixed incomes – like Social Security. If you pay more than 30% of your monthly income for housing, you are at risk!

Principles of housing advocates:

- **Hardworking people should be able to afford housing and still have enough money for groceries and other basic necessities.**
- **Children deserve an opportunity to succeed in school and life, which is tied to having a stable home.**
- **Housing gives people an opportunity to build better lives. To succeed you need a place to call home.**
- **It's only fair that everyone has a safe, decent place to live. Seniors, people with disabilities and single parents ought to have housing they can afford.**

Oregon is one of just two states -- Texas is the other -- that bar county and cities from requiring developers to include a certain percentage of affordable housing in new construction.

Dondero: This fact alone should alert Oregonians we are out of touch with one of the tools needed to address the needs of the working poor in Oregon. Being one of two states out of 50 that prevent this option is shameful in a state where 1 in 4 children grow up in poverty.

Some feel that ending gentrification and encouraging balanced urban revitalization requires inclusionary zoning.

Dondero: There are many tools used to build affordable housing – Oregon's Housing Trust Fund, the document recording fee, federal

Section 8 vouchers & Home program plus federal and state funds to get or keep people out of homelessness.

In fact for every dollar of public or private funds to build affordable housing for low income Oregonians who earn below 60% of a median family income it's possible to leverage an additional ten to thirteen dollars from other sources. So this is a good investment!

The problem is that given funding cut backs at the state and federal level the need outstrips our resources, which is why adding inclusionary zoning would be helpful.

Advocacy for low income housing in Oregon began in the early '50s as the GI's came home from WW II. I've been part of that conversation since '91 as a participant in the Housing Lobby Coalition and now the Housing Housing Alliance.

Why is the conversation about inclusionary zoning happening now? To some it's a symptom of the Great Recession and the foreclosure crisis. To others it the damage inflicted on people by "banks too big to fail." But what has been happening in Oregon lately?

Here's what was accomplished in the 2013 session:

\$2 million in additional resource for Emergency Housing Account (\$1.5 million) and State Homeless Assistance Program (\$0.5 million).

\$2.5 million in Lottery Backed Bonds for the preservation of existing rent subsidized housing and manufactured home parks.

A commitment to shift the way foreclosure dollars are being released to help partners meet needs, and helped move HB 4038 to passage, which will provide residents of manufactured home parks notice of sales.

The foreclosure mediation bill passed in 2013 was also amended to make it more accessible to those in need of help and counseling.

HB 2564 is another tool which we need in Oregon to help address the interconnected problems of gentrification, food deserts and homelessness. It's a matter of justice!

A HOME OF THEIR OWN

~ Interfaith Committee on Homelessness ~

