

AIA Oregon

A Chapter of the American Institute of Architects



TO: Senate Veterans & Emergency Preparedness Committee
FROM: AIA Oregon
DATE: March 3, 2015
RE: Support for SB 85

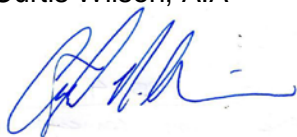
AIA Oregon supports Senate Bill 85 which authorizes local government to create loan programs for seismic rehabilitation. Approximately 85% of Oregon's building stock was built before our building codes recognized the extent of our seismic risk. The change in building codes means that future buildings will meet seismic standards in the code, but the rate of improvement to existing buildings is relatively slow. The City of Portland, which currently has the most stringent seismic rehabilitation code in the State, has found that at the current rate of seismic improvements it will take minimally over a hundred years to upgrade these buildings. Considering the likelihood and severity of earthquakes in Oregon, both lives and the economic vitality of our communities remain at stake.

SB 85 will be an incentive to owners of commercial, industrial, and multi-family buildings that already have a number of compliance hurdles to overcome to seismically rehabilitate their buildings. This work tends to be expensive, particularly for unreinforced masonry buildings, and property owners are often unable to find private loans to assist with financing. While there is an undeniable public and economic benefit to seismically upgrade these buildings, the market does not reward this effort with increased income, which in turn, dissuades lenders.

The ability of local government to make loans or work with private sector lenders to arrange financing for seismic improvements for older buildings will help increase the rate of this essential work. This will make our communities more resilient from a significant earthquake as there will be less damage and loss of life. SB 85 also requires that the loan program be "cost-effective" and imposes requirements that loans are repaid in a timely manner in order to minimize financial risks to the community.

AIA Oregon has identified resilience as one of its most critical state-wide issues. SB-85 is essential legislation that promotes the increased resilience of Oregon's built environment.

Sincerely,
Curtis Wilson, AIA



Vice President, Legislative Affairs