



METRO COUNCIL PRESIDENT TOM HUGHES

February 1, 2016

Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Rep. Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Metro Council, I would like to urge your support for House Bill 4001, the proposed Housing Relief Act. This bill includes a number of proposals to address the need for immediate actions to protect tenants from displacement, enable short-term responses to homelessness, and support the creation and preservation of affordable housing. Metro is particularly supportive of the proposal to allow local governments to adopt inclusionary zoning policies to incent the development of additional affordable housing units.

The availability and affordability of safe, stable housing is a critical and growing challenge across our state. Recent point-in-time estimates indicate that there are more than 19,000 people in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties who are homeless or unstably housed on any given night, including more than 1,200 youth. Rental vacancy rates are at historically low levels and rents are rising faster than incomes. Metro's Planning and Development Department forecasts that our region will have enough land and housing units to accommodate the next 20 years of growth. However, stagnant wages for middle and lower income workers have led us to estimate a current shortage of more than 80,000 units that are affordable to households making less than 60 percent of median income. Jurisdictions across the region are struggling to identify immediate actions to address homelessness and mitigate displacement of renters and to increase production of affordable housing in locations with access to opportunities and services.

Metro is working to provide leadership on housing affordability. In 2014, while in the midst of completing the last urban growth forecast, Metro elevated its attention to the issue by launching the Equitable Housing Initiative. After engaging with a wide range of partners, Metro recently completed a research report entitled "Opportunities and Challenges for Equitable Housing," which proposes a suite of actions local governments can take to address housing availability and affordability. The report is available online at www.oregonmetro.gov/equitablehousing. Just this morning (February 1), Metro hosted an Equitable Housing Leadership Summit that brought together elected leaders, jurisdiction staff, developers, and leaders from non-profits, community organizations, foundations, lenders and business to discuss what's working well and opportunities for collaborating on specific solutions to address affordability.

The Council supports HB 4001, which is an effort to expand the tools available for local jurisdictions to respond to housing needs in their communities. We look forward to continuing to work with our partners across the region and the state to ensure that all of our residents have access to safe and stable housing options.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Hughes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "T" and "H".

Tom Hughes
Metro Council President