

February 22, 2106

**Senator Mark Hass, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue
Support for SB 1533-A**

AARP is pleased to endorse SB 1533, a bill that affords local governments a powerful tool to use in helping to meet local affordable housing needs.

AARP has over 37 million members nationwide and 500,000 in Oregon. With a mission to enhance quality of life for all as we age, we are actively engaged in public policy, education, and community service at the national, state and local levels for our members and society. An important aspect of our work here in Oregon includes advocating for increasing housing options and successful aging in place.

The needs of different communities in Oregon are varied and cannot be managed effectively without access to all the tools available to meet those needs. By amending ORS 197.309, SB 1533 seeks to make one such important tool available to communities to be able to meet the housing needs of older people and their caregivers. Planners nationwide have recognized the value of policies such as these to effectively provide housing choice and opportunities to communities without requiring taxpayer subsidies.

According to a recent report by the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard, "Affordable, accessible, and well-located housing is central to quality of life for people of all ages, but especially for older adults." Most people prefer to remain in their homes as they age. Older people may choose to move at some point when their housing is no longer safe and appropriate for them. If a person decides to move to safer, more appropriate and affordable housing, she should not be forced to leave her community, abandon important social networks, or be forced to live in segregated nursing homes or assisted living facilities simply because there are no other appropriate options. Many older people will be able to live independently in their communities so long as there is appropriate and affordable housing available to them. This also saves significantly on health care costs, because aging in the community is significantly less expensive for the public than aging in a nursing home.

Especially in light of rapid demographic changes in the age of the population, it is urgent that communities have all the tools they need now, so they can meet the needs they know exist and will continue to grow. This bill ensures that wherever new housing is constructed, there will be housing available that meets the needs of people of all incomes and abilities.

SB 1533A includes reasonable sideboards negotiated with home builders, like a limitation on housing that is set aside – at this time, it does not apply to single family homes. The proposal is already a compromise, and we are concerned that further amendments would render the legislation ineffective. We urge you to look very closely at any further amendments and ask hard questions about whether they will be effective in encouraging more affordable housing.

Sincerely,



Gerald Cohen, JD, MPA
State Director
AARP Oregon