



PAT FARR

Lane County Commissioner
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To Chair Alisa Keny-Guyer and Members of the House committee on Human Services and Housing:

Thank you for your commitment to assisting the most vulnerable men, women and families in Oregon by addressing the imminent crisis that surrounds the lack of affordable housing throughout the state. Today's hearing on HB 2937 and 2938 is a step toward providing greater flexibility regarding places to live for so many Oregonians who today suffer from homelessness or inadequate housing.

I serve as a member of the Lane County Poverty and Homelessness Board and chaired the subcommittee on Veterans' Housing that sponsored and facilitated Operation 365. The goal of Operation 365 was to house 365 homeless veterans—one for each day in the year—in Lane County in 2015. We exceeded that goal by housing 404 veterans in 2015, and to date through the programs driven by the Board, have provided housing or prevented impending homeless for more than 635 veterans. In November 2016, Mayor Kitty Piercy and I were invited to the White House by then-First Lady Michelle Obama to be recognized and celebrate our success with Operation 365.

Using our demonstrated effectiveness and our broad network of private, nonprofit and governmental partners, the Poverty and Homelessness Board has established a goal of building or repurposing 600 new housing first supportive housing units in Lane County by 2021. This is a lofty goal, and with the recent changes in the attractiveness and availability of tax credits to offset debt in building affordable housing, the goal becomes all the more difficult to achieve.

Providing new venues for housing will be an essential part of our ability to meet our goal to place hundreds people with behavioral health disorders, mental illness and substance abuse, in supportive housing. Acquiring and building properties near services inside our urban growth boundaries is becoming more expensive and ever-more challenging daily.

Allowing well-regulated and dignified additional dwelling units (ADU's) and RV placement on land zoned rural residential or farmland can be significant in freeing up more affordable units inside our cities where the necessary services are more readily available.

With county-enforced regulation a well-balanced approach can be achieved, diminishing negative impact on neighbors or transportation systems.

Thank you for your attention, for your continued service to our vulnerable neighbors and your favorable consideration of these two pieces of legislation.

Sincerely,

Pat Farr,
Chair, Lane County Board of Commissioners