

*From the personal desk of*  
Sharon Konopa, Mayor of Albany

March 30, 2017

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Sen. Michael Denbrow

Sen. Alan Olson

Sen. Herman Baertschiger Jr.

Sen. Floyd Prozanski

Sen. Arnie Roblan

**Re: In support of Senate Bills 114 and 258, amending SB1573**

Dear Senators,

Please support these senate bills, which repeals the unfair changes SB1573 enacted that eliminates cities home rule of voter approved annexations.

I have been a member of Albany City Council for over twenty years and I am on my ninth year as the Mayor of Albany. When I was first elected, I supported Albany's charter amendment which requires annexations to be approved by the voters.

In the 90's Albany was experiencing a significant amount of annexations and housing sprawl, yet our downtown and community were blighted. My efforts over the past two decades have been to revitalize our community and downtown. By having our voter approved annexation in our charter has been a valuable tool to curb sprawl and gear the focus towards infill and revitalization.

If any of you have visited Albany recently, you would have to agree we have experienced a high amount of private investment for a community our size? If this fix of SB1573 does not pass, I fear my years of efforts will be reversed and sprawl will be more attractive to investors than revitalization and density to preserve our precious farmland and food supply in the mid-Willamette Valley.

Senators Prozanski and Roblan understand the value of protecting our farmland from sprawl, as they were one of the champions of the fix for Measure 37 (the property rights measure) with Measure 49. They listened to countless hours of hearings from passionate people on both sides of this issue, as I witnessed from attending every hearing that year. Measure 49 was a measure many newer legislators today probably have not heard of or even comprehend how valuable the measure was back then. But this provision that impacts cities charters is no different than the Measure 37 proponents who seem to only care what can be built today and disregard any farmland for future generation's food supply.

The Portland metro area is almost out of land to annex, yet many feel the legislators in that region seem to disregard the rest of the state in how valuable voter approved annexation charters are for well planned growth in other communities. Just because this part of the state is in a housing crisis, then don't punish the rest of the state. We value our prime farmland in the valley.

In my opinion, SB1573 was a 'feel good bill' in thinking it would address affordable housing and the lack of housing stock in the Portland area. This was a desperate game just to get a bill passed and then hand over to the lobbyists this take away from many cities charters. I know that seems to be how the state legislature works at time and thank goodness that does not take place in my city. Any decision I support, I want to be proud of in the future! Plus, no proponent of SB1573 even attempted to contact myself or Albany's neighboring cities, who have this provision in our charter, to see what our opinion was over voter approved annexations.

I do understand the overall need for affordable housing in our state, as I am president of Albany's non-profit low income housing provider. Also my husband rents an apartment in northeast Portland and has seen a 33% increase in rent the past three years. Preventing cities from voter approved annexations is not the solution to the lack of affordable housing.

Cities like Albany who have had these provisions for years in our charter should be grandfathered in at the least. But even if you don't, since when does the legislature take away cities language in their charters? Is this going to be a common practice from our legislature? If so, then why not draft up a charter for all 240 cities in Oregon to have to follow and take away all home rules? That basically is what you have started with SB1573 and that is not right, nor is that our Oregon.

You do not hear from me very often over legislative bills, as I respect the decision makers in delving through the countless bills each session. But, when a bill impacts my community I cannot sit back and let this happen. Please support this bills repeal, so cities can continue with voter approved annexations in their charters.

*If Oregon has no farm land left in the future, then will future generations be proud of the past decisions that were made?* Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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