



## **Bill Hall County Commissioner**

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### **Testimony in Support of HB 3260**

Chair Barnhart, Vice Chairs Bentz and Smith Warner, members of the Committee: For the record, my name is Bill Hall. I'm currently serving my fourth term as a Lincoln County Commissioner and am president of the Association of Oregon Counties for 2017. I am here today to ask you to support HB 3260.

As I am sure you're all aware, almost every part of our state is experiencing a housing shortage, but the coast is one of the places it's particularly acute. In addition to the problems that exist everywhere such as financing and developer capacity, the coast is a place where average wages and average housing prices, both for rental and home ownership, are particularly out of whack. Many of our jobs are part-time and seasonal, and the majority of those are in the visitor industry.

In Lincoln County, for example, the average person earning minimum wage is 31 years old. When I took office in 2005, people were distressed that we had 400 students in the Lincoln County School District who met the federal definition of homelessness. Last school year, we fell just thirty students short of one thousand homeless students. To express that another way, that's more than 14 percent of the total school-age population in the county. The statewide average? Four percent.

Meanwhile, we have a rental vacancy rate in the county of less than one percent and only a minority of housing stock in most communities is full-time owner occupied. For instance, in Lincoln City, 40 percent of the homes are primary residences, 30 percent are in the vacation rental pool, and the remaining 30 percent are part-time residences not in the rental pool. No wonder I get calls from coffee stand owners, restaurant managers, health clinic managers and countless others telling me that housing price and availability is their number barrier to employee recruitment and retention.



Because there's still been demand for high end homes and homes built specifically for vacation rentals, we've seen very little development aimed at working families. One exception was a developer who built 87 apartments in Lincoln City recently. He told me that when he advertised the availability of the last 30 units, he received 400 applications. So clearly, the need is there, and HB 3260 provides one more tool that coastal communities can use to meet that need.

I want to close with a brief history of Lincoln County's TLT. It was first adopted in the mid-1970s. Since then, our commissioners have been cautious in asking voters to increase it, so that's only been done three times since the original measure was adopted. The first two measures went to the ballot with the support of our local lodging association, which was not active at the time of the third vote. I think coastal communities watch the industry and each other carefully, and exercise reasonable constraint in asking voters to increase it.

