

Testimony in favor of HB 2140 May 8, 2017

To the Senate Committee on Business and Transportation

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Chair Beyer and Committee members, **I am testifying in favor of HB 2140 on behalf of the City Club of Portland.** Early in March, the Club members voted by a 98% favorable margin to recommend that **“The Legislature should require a seismic disclosure statement at the point of sale for single-family homes.”** HB 2140 is consistent with the intent of this recommendation.

I am a Portland resident and was a member of the research study committee of the City Club whose focus was to see how prepared the Portland Metro area was for the predicted magnitude nine Cascadia subduction zone earthquake and what realistic steps could be taken to increase the resilience of its services, infrastructure and economic vitality.

Over a nine month period, the committee interviewed over 80 scientists, engineers, building owners, and government officials. The committee reviewed over 100 scholarly articles and scientific reports, policy papers, legislation, and popular articles. The resulting report *“Big Steps Before the Big One: How the Portland area can bounce back after a major earthquake”* and its recommendations were overwhelmingly approved by the membership of City Club [<http://www.pdxcityclub.org/earthquake>]. The information discussed below can be found in this report.

The City Club made fourteen recommendations from this work concerning energy infrastructure, building safety, transportation, social resilience, and government resilience planning for the Portland area. **One recommendation is the subject of HB 2140, that “The Legislature should require a seismic disclosure statement at the point of sale for single-family homes.”**

Improving the seismic resilience of single-family homes is critical to the state’s social and economic recovery from a major earthquake. Although wood frame buildings perform very well in earthquakes, many homes were built before the 1974 requirement to be bolted to the foundation. Those homes can slide off their foundations in a large earthquake and are subject to substantial damage and collapse – and loss of life. In the Portland area alone, it is estimated that up to 100,000 homes still need to be bolted to their foundation. Yet, every family that is able remain in its home is one less family that will need post-earthquake shelter and is less likely to relocate out of the area. The potential danger exists throughout the state wherever large shaking is expected to occur during a Cascadia subduction zone earthquake – essentially everything west of the Cascade range.

FEMA’s former Region X Director, Kenneth Murphy testified to the City Club committee that retrofitting single-family homes by bolting them to their foundation would be one of the most cost-effective resiliency measures that could be implemented. Although 80% of the homes in Portland could be bolted to their foundation for less than \$6,000, it is estimated that relatively few have been retrofitted – less than 1,300 since 2000. We feel the situation is likely to be very similar around the State, and it is clear that the pace of retrofitting needs to be accelerated.

The City Club of Portland recommends passage of a seismic disclosure statement to provide encouragement to homeowners to voluntarily undertake this critical resiliency measure. The cost of bolting a house to its foundation is small relative to typical house costs and mortgages, and so a disclosure at the point-of-sale is an effective time for buyers and sellers to consider the benefits of the retrofit. The disclosure itself has very little or no cost in most cases, but the information disclosed should be quite useful to buyers and sellers in house price negotiations and in specifying work to be done as part of the transaction.

The City Club of Portland supports the passage of HB 2140.