



June 6, 2017

Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly  
900 Court St. NE, H-478  
Salem, Oregon 97301



**Testimony in support of House Bill 2007A with -4 amendments - Housing for all Oregonians**

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly,

This state is facing a serious housing crisis and Oregonians are hurting. This broad group of organizations representing diverse communities supports House Bill 2007A with dash 4 amendments on behalf of the millions of Oregonians who want to see more abundant, diverse, and affordable housing options in their communities. This bill needs your support to help ensure that every Oregonian has a secure and affordable place to live, in homes that meet their needs, and in neighborhoods with access to opportunity.

Having enough housing for everyone is a metric of a community's livability and health. Oregonians share this value and have always prided our state on its livability. We now face an outsized challenge in housing.

Oregonians are spending more than ever for housing. Members of our communities are being pushed out of their homes and neighborhoods as costs soar. Some towns are finding it hard to build economic stability because would-be workers cannot afford to live there. And in larger cities like Portland and Eugene, people are forced to move farther and farther away from what matters most - their friends and family, their centers of worship, their jobs, schools, and hobbies. People who are looking to downsize from a larger home, first-time homebuyers, and smaller families are being excluded from accessing the housing they need in their own neighborhoods.

Oregon is in need of more housing, especially affordable and diverse housing options in every community and neighborhood. HB 2007A-4 helps us meet this goal. This bill will increase the supply of affordable and market rate housing by speeding up the permitting process for affordable housing projects and by clarifying the review process for all housing. The bill will also ensure that local governments:

- Clarify standards used to approve housing permit applications, reducing unnecessary delay.
- Allow the development of the smaller, discrete housing options of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and duplexes, in single-family zoned neighborhoods,
- Strengthen requirements for clear & objective review standards for housing developments.
- Streamline procedures to make it easier to provide more housing, and especially affordable housing, in all Oregon communities.
- Have appropriate input in creating historic districts, using local, transparent public processes.
- Allow religious organizations to build affordable housing on their land.

Oregon's housing issues have been long simmering, impacting our lowest-income community members for years, and now our middle-income families as well. There are almost no cities in Oregon where a family earning a median income can afford the median-priced home at 30% of their income--a common standard for affordability. The inability to find affordable, well-located housing is affecting the vast majority of Oregonians.

Two-thirds of our families are now 1 – 2 person households – that's our seniors, single 20-somethings starting their lives, single parents, and young couples without kids. They are our teachers, nurses, firefighters, electricians, and baristas. They want to live in walkable neighborhoods with good schools, age in the neighborhood where they raised their children,





and not have to commute for hours each day. It's high time we act to ensure our housing matches the needs of all Oregonians.

This problem partially stems from our outdated zoning and building processes. The vast majority of residential land in our towns and cities is zoned for single family, detached housing on larger lots, and it has been that way since the 1950s. We have zoned most of our residential lands in ways that functionally and economically exclude a large percentage of Oregonians at *any* price-point by not offering the type of housing they need.

Our towns and cities find themselves with this housing shortage for many reasons. Some of it is simple neglect – some of our residential zoning has not been updated since the 1980s - and some through intentional actions. The primary means of building wealth in the US is through homeownership. Yet as we all know, historically, many of the single family neighborhoods that exist today were not open to people of color, and so that path to owning a home in neighborhoods of opportunity was simply not available to all. The impacts of that discrimination remain with us today.

Additional barriers to housing include unclear and subjective zoning standards, vague design criteria for new housing, and limits on diverse housing types, infill development, redevelopment, and development on smaller lots. This can happen through outright prohibition or the misuse of the national historic district designation to prevent change. This has resulted in insufficient housing supply, lack of needed diversity in housing, more expensive housing, and more economically segregated neighborhoods.

House Bill 2007A-4 addresses these challenges head on. HB 2007A-4 not only promotes and hastens affordable housing construction for our lower-income families, it also ensures that our middle-income families have access to homes that fit their needs, in our current neighborhoods. Clearing up zoning standards, design criteria, and allowing smaller housing like ADUs and duplexes in our single-family neighborhoods are all tools to ensure that we have abundant, diverse, and affordable housing options for all Oregonians in a timely manner.

If HB 2007A-4 does not pass, our housing challenges will continue down the same path. More people will be forced to the periphery of their community, more cars and congestion will be added to our roads, more farms and forests will get paved over because we didn't accommodate our growth more efficiently, and our taxpayers will bear the burden of obscenely expensive new infrastructure. Providing housing for people in our current communities is the right thing to do.

We believe in an Oregon that is open to everyone. We need to make sure that we are keeping the door open for people to live, work, and play in our neighborhoods as our population grows. We can't throw up a wall around the state, and we can't abide by people being pushed out of their communities. We can and must welcome all Oregonians. Oregon needs every tool available to meet its housing challenges. HB 2007A-4 is one part of the solution, and an important one. We implore you to join us and support HB 2007A-4.

