

Community Housing Fund
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Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Oregon Legislature
Salem, OR 97301

RE: House Bill 2007A

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislative Assembly:

At the Washington County Public Affairs Forum earlier this week, our County Chair Andy Duyck made the following comment:

"Now, more than ever, I am convinced that the availability and affordability of housing consumes more attention and concern than just about any other issue we face."

This month the Westside Economic Alliance decided to focus all its efforts on housing--hosting a series of discussions seeking solutions to the growing crisis. The building slow down during the recession, paired with massive in-migration, led to record low vacancy rates, and this undersupply is currently exacerbated by rapidly rising labor and materials costs.

The units we see coming on line in Hillsboro and throughout the county are frequently renting for \$1,200 per month or more. Steep increases in rents at existing properties have already displaced many of our residents, and mass evictions as properties turn over have left others literally on the streets.

In our county, while we have eight on and off-street parking spaces for every car, we have a shortage of between 14-23,000 spaces--or housing units--for people of modest means (those at or below 50% of area median income). And while we will add 45 new units of regulated affordable housing for seniors above a library in Cornelius next year, as Mayor Jef Dalin says, "It's like shaving ice from an iceberg; it's a small dent in a big problem." We tend to see no more than three regulated affordable projects come on line each year, given limited gap funds.

This is why I join you today, in support of House Bill 2007A. Our success as a county, and a state, is tied to our ability to provide housing choices for everyone. Oregonians need a place to call home if they are to succeed in school, work, and life. Homes can and should come in a variety of shapes and sizes to meet the diverse needs of our residents.

This bill will help us meet that goal, by increasing the speed and certainty around local planning and permitting standards. Six of the sixteen cities in Washington County have populations of less than 5,000, and would not be subject to some of the provisions in this bill (such as permitting timelines, density and infill), but they represent a small percentage of our population. And I'm fairly certain they will still be

interested in adjusting their standards if this will help in building towards the future. They often look to their larger neighbors for contract support to implement zoning and building processes.

For the most part, as I work on updates to Comp Plans and other planning processes with local jurisdictions throughout our county, they are discussing these issues already—they are actively looking for creative ways to bring additional homes on-line quickly and cost effectively. Forest Grove, for example, is working on an *Affordable Housing Action Strategy*, and while it has not been finalized, the highest priority item to date has been the promotion of “small homes meeting minimum standards such as accessory dwelling units.” Local churches who house the homeless have been active participants in this process, and have agreed they would rather focus on permanent housing solutions than emergency shelters. This bill helps make a direct connection for them to do just that.

The bill pushes local jurisdictions to consider the impacts of their processes on the development of various housing types, sizes, and for various income levels. Many of our jurisdictions have community plans in place from the 1980s that simply don’t reflect the needs or desires of today’s homeowners and renters. While in meeting after meeting we hear planners and City Councils talk about missing middle, courtyard cluster, tiny homes, accessory dwelling units and plexes, we know this bill would help move those discussions toward action.

We urge you to take action on this bill, as it encapsulates many promising practices that we believe will make a difference in providing housing choice for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,

Sheila Greenlaw-Fink
Executive Director