

From: Stephanie Whitlock
To: [JWMNR Exhibits](#)
Subject: HB 2007 testimony
Date: Friday, June 23, 2017 1:06:38 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[image003.png](#)
[HB2007 testimony Stephanie Whitlock, Architectural Heritage Center.pdf](#)

June 22, 2017

RE: HB 2007

TO: Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources

In what is a well-intentioned attempt to establish greater equity in housing, HB 2007 has the strong potential to create greater inequity. It incentivizes the pace of residential demolitions that remove our most accessible, affordable housing for renters, low income residents, and other vulnerable populations. It is notable that much of the modest, affordable housing stock that currently already exists is in historic neighborhoods. These are areas with diverse, multi-layered histories that are protected and preserved by mere virtue of being part of an historic district.

I'd like to address some of the rhetoric around this bill that has maligned historic preservation as being racist and even equates historic districts to redlining. This is an outmoded perspective on historic preservation, which at its root seeks to uncover and bring to light the different voices and experiences of all people in our society. Our organization, the Architectural Heritage Center, has been deeply invested for many decades in preserving the history and historic properties of diverse communities across Portland, past and present, from Old and New Chinatown to the Jewish community in south Portland, and presenting these histories publicly. A substantial project we have worked on since the mid-1990s has focused on the documentation and preservation of properties associated with African American history in Portland. We have published a book on the issue in two editions, produced grade-school curricula, and have written two National Register nominations for relevant single-family houses associated with African American history. A current project we are working on will determine the qualifying criteria for more of these buildings to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The former founding director of the Architectural Heritage Center, Cathy Galbraith, has for

over two decades been behind the local fight to protect African American properties. Since 2014, at least 60 of our African American-related buildings have been demolished and the pace is only accelerating. As Ms. Galbraith wrote in her letter to the Ways and Means Committee opposing the current version of HB 2007, “Many of our African American building resources are small and modest, providing renters and homeowners alike with affordable housing; these are the very houses being targeted for demolition and construction of huge and expensive new replacement houses...This is gentrification and it is in full swing. Long-time homeowners are finding that they can’t afford the rising property values and taxes in their old suddenly ‘hot’ neighborhoods; rising rents are displacing long-time residents, as owners struggle to also pay those same taxes and must raise rents to do so.”

HB 2007 will have the opposite effect of what it is intended to do. Not only will it lead to the destruction of our existing affordable housing, but it will sacrifice—to the market—our historic resources, ethnic neighborhoods, and our diversity.

We urge you to adopt the amendments to HB 2007 that have been thoughtfully proposed by the Portland Coalition for Historic Resources. PCHR is comprised of the Architectural Heritage Center and a number of other Portland-based preservation organizations and groups.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Stephanie Whitlock
Executive Director
Architectural Heritage Center

Architectural HERITAGE CENTER

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Whitlock". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Whitlock
Executive Director
Architectural Heritage Center