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Metro Policy Advisory Committee
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January 24, 2018

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Rep. Tina Kotek, Speaker of the House
Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer, Chair, House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Support for House Joint Resolution 201

Speaker Kotek, Rep. Keny-Guyer, and Members of the Committee:

The Metro Policy Advisory Committee wishes to express its support for House Joint Resolution 201, which would refer a constitutional amendment to the 2018 ballot to allow greater flexibility when local governments spend funds raised by general obligation bonds for affordable housing.

With this amendment, communities across the state who wish to address the shortage of affordable homes for working families, seniors, people with disabilities, communities of color and low income residents will have the ability to utilize public-private partnerships to leverage the impact of their general obligation bond funds.

The intent of Article XI, Section 9 of the Oregon Constitution, written in the 1800s, was to prevent government pledges of general tax revenues to aid private enterprises. However, in the case of affordable housing, this provision serves as a barrier to achieving the best outcomes because affordable housing is often financed through complex arrangements that combine government, private and not-for-profit funding sources, including important federal tax credits not available to governments. If enacted by the voters, HJR 201 will make it possible to significantly increase the amount of housing that can be built using funds raised by voter-approved local bond measures.

With increasing living costs and stagnant wages, it is critical that we do everything in our power to ensure that all members of our communities have the opportunity to thrive. This constitutional amendment would help municipalities work towards that goal by increasing the availability of homes people can afford. We encourage the Legislature to refer the amendment to the ballot for November 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Denny Doyle".

Mayor Denny Doyle, Chair
Metro Policy Advisory Committee