

February 11, 2019

Chair Barker, Vice-chairs Barreto and Bynum, and members of the committee: SEP

I apologize that I cannot be present to testify this morning. My child care situation was not flexible enough for me to make it to Salem today.

In October 2008, I was getting ready to live the American dream. I had saved enough to buy a modest, 100-year-old home in Portland's Lents neighborhood. It had a prickly pear cactus in front, and as a native of the Nevada desert, it tugged at my Great Basin heartstrings.

October 2008 was an interesting time to buy a home. Bear Sterns and Lehman Bros. had just collapsed. Credit was extremely tight. Once I found a house that had dropped into my price range, it took months to get my credit approved. And the whole time, I kept thinking about the 100-year-old bungalow with the cactus in front.

In January 2009, I got a call from my real estate agent: Everything was finally ready. It was time to sign paperwork and bring checks. And in the massive stack of forms was a disclosure that was new to me: The property I was buying was in a 100-year-floodplain.

That late in the game, there was no way to walk back. I was buying that house, even if it cost an extra \$150 a month for bank-required flood insurance.

A lot has changed in this past decade. Notably, Congress significantly raised FEMA flood insurance rates, critically impacting many of my neighbors and ultimately prompting an Oregon Solutions project to address development and stability in the developed portions of the Johnson Creek floodplain.

Rep. Reardon's proposal is a common-sense addition to the disclosures that are already required under ORS: Letting potential buyers know if the home they want to purchase is in a FEMA floodplain.

I want to be clear: I expect this bill, if it passes, will cost me money. The disclosure will lower the resale value of my home.

But it's unfair to potential buyers to not know as early as possible whether a home is in a FEMA floodplain. Sure, a savvy buyer can, at this point, find the information online. But not every buyer is a savvy buyer. And we can't guarantee that FEMA will always make it easy to access its floodplain database.

I urge you to give HB 2312 a do-pass recommendation and help future homeowners get a clearer picture of the challenges of a home they are considering purchasing.

Thanks,

Nick Christensen