

I'm writing in strong support of HB 2001, because I share Representative Kotek's belief in the urgency of Oregon's housing crisis—and because of the plain fact that HB 2001 will allow more Oregonians the choice to live where they want.

As Oregon's cities grow, we've seen more and more lower-income renters and younger homebuyers pushed out of their neighborhoods by more people competing for a fixed stock of homes. The only way to avoid that zero-sum fight over limited housing is to allow more homes in the places people want to live. HB 2001 will accomplish that—in a simple, gentle way, and at no cost to Oregon taxpayers—by allowing modestly-sized additional homes in neighborhoods where we're currently prohibiting them.

The critiques of HB 2001 are a mix of conflicting claims: I've seen it argued that allowing multifamily housing would have no effect on affordability—and at the same time argued that multifamily housing would cause property values to plummet.

I've seen it argued that developers just aren't interested in building missing-middle housing—but in that case there's no risk in passing the bill: at worst it would have no effect.

And I've seen it argued that HB 2001 would turn Oregon communities into “patchwork”—but Oregon's old neighborhoods are already a beautiful patchwork of multiple housing types, built before we chose to ban those choices. I live in a single-family home in Southeast Portland, built in 1916. My next-door neighbors live in a four-plex. At the end of the block is a six-unit courtyard apartment building, built in 1928. Units in that building cost about half as much as the surrounding single family homes. I'm glad that the people who live there have the choice and the opportunity to be my neighbors—and this bill will allow more Oregonians the chance to share that opportunity, by removing the zoning codes that shut them out.

I don't expect HB 2001 to be a magic bullet that will solve Oregon's housing affordability crisis. But it's a practical step in the right direction, one that will allow homeowners more choice in what to do with their property, allow residents more choice in how and where to live, and help at least some people find more affordable homes, at a time when our state needs all the help it can get.

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