



March 4, 2019

*Via e-mail: [sbgg.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:sbgg.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov)*  
Senate Committee on Business and General Government  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony on SB 621 (Prohibits local governments from restricting use of dwellings for vacation occupancy)**

Dear Chair Riley & Members of the Committee on Business and General Government:

Thrive Hood River (formerly Hood River Valley Residents Committee) is one of Oregon's oldest local land use advocacy groups. Since 1977 our mission has been to protect farms, forests, special wild places and the livability of urban and rural communities in Hood River County. We are writing to express our opposition to SB 621 which would prohibit local governments from restricting the use of dwellings for vacation rentals.

Bounded by the Columbia River Gorge in the north and Mt. Hood in the south, Hood River is a recreational wonderland. We've become ground zero for the negative impacts of vacation rentals. We've seen these impacts in the livability of our neighborhoods, our housing supply and affordability and the viability of farming in the EFU zone. In 2016, the City of Hood River adopted zoning code and business licensing to mitigate the impacts of vacation rentals. Hood River County is working on new amendments to its vacation rental code right now.

Hood River is in the top 1% of most expensive rural counties in the US. Some of our affordability problem is caused by the increasing number of homes that are no longer available for year round residents because they have been converted to vacation rentals. In 2015, vacation rentals and second homes comprised fully 12% of the total housing stock in the City of Hood River. And it's no wonder: in our area, a vacation rental yields more in one week than a long-term rental does in a month.

Vacation rentals are a commercial, not a residential, use. They disrupt rather than enhance neighborhoods. On streets with a high concentration of vacation rentals, year round residents complain of party houses all summer and dark homes in the winter. Weakening the community's social fabric has real consequences. Hood River is also blessed with some of the most productive orchard land in the country. Oregon embarked on its statewide land use program largely to protect farmland for commercial agriculture. Introducing more tourists into the farm zone leads to more conflicts and more expense for farmers, whether it's tourists wandering in orchards and jeopardizing farmers' Global GAP certification or tourists complaining about common farm practices like frost fans and spraying.

Local governments need the ability to regulate vacation rentals to address local issues. The City of Hood River chose to protect the integrity, livability and quality of life of Hood River's neighborhoods by declaring that its residential zones are for residents, not commercial enterprises. There is already evidence that their program is working as intended. Former vacation rentals are returning to the available housing stock (realtors say they have never seen so many homes available for long term lease), the price curve has flattened and neighbor complaints are down dramatically. Please reject SB 621.

Best regards,

Heather Staten  
Executive Director