



**National Trust *for*
Historic Preservation**

Save the past. Enrich the future.

March 30, 2019

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE, HR C
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Dembrow and Committee Members:

The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States writes in support of Senate Bill 927 and 929, which are designed to strengthen the State of Oregon's historic preservation program in important ways.¹

First, with respect to Senate Bill 927, the "Public Participation in Preservation Act," we understand from our prior experience that Oregon's existing landmark designation system has created unintended consequences that have arisen out of a mid-1990s law that required "owner consent," an issue we helped challenge successfully two years ago before the Oregon Supreme Court. However, the proposed changes of Bill 927, if adopted, will bring Oregon in line nationally with best practices—along with Certified Local Government requirements—by removing owner consent as a way to veto local landmark designation.

In addition, Bill 927 would require local historic preservation commissions to decide whether to designate historic properties, rather than relying solely on a building's or district's listing in the National Register of Historic Places. This change will thus allow communities to become more engaged in deciding which historic and cultural resources matter to them.

Second, the National Trust supports Senate Bill 929, the "Preservation, Housing, and Seismic Safety Act." Importantly, this legislation will help limit demolitions of historic structures, promote seismic upgrades and historic rehabilitation, and promote conversion of old buildings into needed housing. Broadening Oregon's historic preservation program in these ways will undoubtedly encourage economic development, too. Tourism, new businesses, and jobs flourish in historic communities, especially when historic structures are mixed with appropriate new construction. Finally, Senate Bill 929 will help promote historic preservation in rural communities and smaller towns, which often are overlooked.

¹ In addition, the National Trust supports Senate Bill 48, which extends the sunset of Oregon's historic property special assessment program. Financial incentives such as these yield important dividends and encourage participation in historic preservation as a voluntary activity.

In conclusion, in a time of intense development pressure in Oregon, along with other pressures created by a need for more housing, the National Trust encourages Oregon's legislature to pass Senate Bills 927 and 929 as important steps in the right direction by empowering communities with state-of-the-art legal and policy tools.

The National Trust stands ready to assist you and your staffs as the State of Oregon works to make its historic preservation program one of the strongest and innovative in the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William J. Cook". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

William J. Cook
Associate General Counsel