

Architectural HERITAGE CENTER

March 25, 2019

Dear Senator Dembrow and Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee members:

The Bosco-Milligan Foundation's Architectural Heritage Center supports the two bills put forward by your committee, SB 927 and SB 929. We believe they are essential to protecting the historic and cultural resources of Oregon. State direction on the identification and regulation of these resources is necessary and is provided by SB 927. Identification is not enough, however, and funding assistance is needed to keep these resources functional and safe. SB 929 provides some state funding to do that. Together, these bills are major tools to help local communities make decisions about what to save and how to preserve Oregon's historic and cultural resources.

The Public Participation in Preservation Act (SB 927) brings the local community back into the decisions about historic and cultural resources. This is as it should be, for it should be up to the local community to decide what is of cultural or historical value and how that value stacks up with other goals of comprehensive planning. Unlike the rest of the U.S., Oregon's current "owner consent" law gives decision-making roles to the property owner and the state and the federal governments. SB 927 changes that by setting standards that enable local communities to identify and designate possible resources. It is helpful in identifying a minimum standard of protection and local public process requirements to insure that all interested parties can be heard before local protection requirements are imposed. Furthermore, this change is much better aligned with Oregon's land use planning system, where the state sets the goals but the local governments take action after considering the trade-offs and hearing from the public. SB 927 allows local governments to develop historic resource programs to designate resources for protection and uncouples the state's dependence on the National Register as the basis for protections.

Two other elements of SB 927 are also important to us. First, Section 4 makes it clear that already designated resources must maintain their current protections. Given Oregon's long experience with historic designation and protection, this is essential. Second, Section 5 proposes funding for DLCDC to assist with historic inventories. It is critical that local communities update their current inventories, which were mostly done in the 1980s. This is necessary not only to cover the 40 years of buildings now eligible, but to include properties of cultural significance, as well as architectural significance.

The Preservation, Housing, and Seismic Safety Act (SB 929) provides critical funding toward the protection of the state's historic properties. Oregon is one of the few states without a tax-based incentive for rehabilitation, which places thousands of historic properties at risk. This bill creates tax credit for certified historic property project contributions, including a 25% rebate on qualified rehabilitation costs and 35% for seismic upgrades. The rehabilitation rebates would come from a

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preservation fund, the “State Historic Property Project Fund,” created by the auctioning of state income tax credits. Further, it prioritizes projects that “retain or create housing.”

In summary, these two bills, if adopted, will make a significant improvement in the identification, designation, protection, and rehabilitation of Oregon’s historic and cultural resources. We urge the committee to adopt them.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Whitlock
Executive Director



Steve Dotterer
President, Board of Directors