



HOUSING ALLIANCE

April 29, 2019

House Committee on Human Services Housing
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer, Vice Chair Noble, Vice-Chair Sanchez, members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for SB 8A, which provides attorney's fees for instances in which an affordable housing development is appealed to the Land Use Board of Appeals, and the developer or the city prevail.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of ninety organizations from all parts of the state. Our members have come together with the knowledge that housing opportunity is the foundation on which all of our success is built – individual success as students, parents, workers, and community members as well as the success of our communities. We represent a diverse set of voices including non-profit housing developers, residents of affordable housing, local jurisdictions, and organizations working to meet basic needs in every corner of our state.

We believe that all Oregonians need a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Today, we simply don't have enough affordable homes for people who need them, and vacancy rates have dropped precipitously towards zero in communities across Oregon. People – our neighbors and members of our community – are struggling with homelessness, housing instability, rent burdens, and to make ends meet and put food on the table. During the last school year, over 21,750 of our school children in grades K – 12 experienced homelessness at some point during the year.

Across Oregon, we have skilled affordable housing developers who are experts at building safe, stable, and affordable rental housing and affordable homes for sale. Their work is complex, and begins with identifying potential locations, needs, and resources. We know that local communities need additional support and resources to assist in the identification and appropriate zoning of sites for multifamily housing, and are working to support efforts to increase staff capacity and expertise at the local level.

We also know that even when sites are zoned appropriately, there may be concerns expressed or challenges filed by local neighbors that have little to do with the proposals themselves. These neighbors may be motivated by concerns over living near affordable housing and misconceptions about who lives in affordable housing or who simply want density to be limited, use zoning and design arguments to increase the difficulty of siting housing.

We know that people who live in and need access to safe, stable, and affordable housing are just like the rest of us – parents trying to provide a better life for our children, seniors who have helped to build our communities and now rely on social security for their income, people who experience a disability who rely on a limited and fixed income, and other people working low wage jobs who need assistance in the face of rising housing costs.

When affordable housing developments are challenged and appealed to the Land Use Board of Appeals, we know that it costs precious time and resources. The vast majority of affordable housing developers in Oregon are non-profit organizations or public housing authorities, who rely on public dollars to build and finance affordable rental housing. Delays due to neighborhood backlash and appeals mean that projects may cost more to build, may not include as many homes, or may not be built at all.

Challenges to affordable housing may be a delay tactic, or an attempt to reduce the size and scope of the project, even in the face of overwhelming need across our communities. We believe that Senate Bill 8A will help to provide reimbursement for attorneys' fees as well as potentially reduce the number of claims which only seek to delay the project. We are concerned about what we perceive to be the large number of projects which face delays simply because neighbors are concerned about living near affordable rental housing and they wish it to be built somewhere else.

Affordable housing is unique. It is, as you have heard, often difficult to finance due to complex funding sources and timelines for those funding sources. As you have also heard, it can be difficult to build due to complexities with siting, zoning, local processes, and more. We cannot let the additional costs of delay tactics to be added to the cost of the homes our communities need.

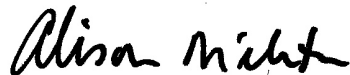
Affordable housing is an important part of our community infrastructure, and the people who call these apartments home are vital members of our community – they work as construction workers, bank tellers, school teachers, day care providers, health aides, and janitors; they are the seniors who helped to build our community; they are the people who experience disability and deserve a place to call home integrated into our community.

We know what home, and what stable housing, means to all of us. When people have safe and stable housing, it has important and significant benefits, and allows people to build for their futures. Kids are able to focus on the things that matter – being kids, doing their homework – instead of worrying about where their families will sleep at night. Parents are able to focus on work, on family, and on community. Safe and stable housing that people can afford is key to accessing opportunity.

We urge you to support SB 8A.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison McIntosh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance Members

1000 Friends of Oregon
211info
Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
Bradley Angle
BRIDGE Housing
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
Chrisman Development
Church Women United of Lane County
City of Beaverton
City of Creswell
City of Eugene
City of Forest Grove
City of Hillsboro
City of Hood River
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Coalition of Community Health Clinics
Coalition of Housing Advocates
Common Ground OR-WA
Community Action Partnership of Oregon
Community Action Team
Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
Cornerstone Community Housing
Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon
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Enterprise Community Partners
Fair Housing Council of Oregon
FOOD for Lane County
Habitat for Humanity of Oregon
Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
Hacienda CDC
Housing Authority of Clackamas County
Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
Human Solutions
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Innovative Housing, Inc.
Interfaith Alliance on Poverty
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Lincoln County
Looking Glass Community Services
Mainstream Housing, Inc
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Mid Columbia Housing Authority
Native American Youth and Family Center
(NAYA)
Neighborhood Economic Development Corp.
(NEDCO)
Neighborhood Partnerships
NeighborImpact
NeighborWorks Umpqua
Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Center for Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Oregon Housing Authorities
Oregon Law Center
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
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Portland Housing Center
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Rogue Action Center
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
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Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Transition Projects
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Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition
Willamette Neighborhood Housing Services