



3/15/2021

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Nathan Teske, and I'm the Executive Director of Bienestar. For the last 40 years, we've been building affordable housing in Washington County. Bienestar's mission is to build housing, hope, and community for the wellbeing of Latinxs, immigrants, and all families in need. We know how to build the housing our community desperately needs, but all too often we run into barriers that we can't overcome without your help.

Senate Bill 8 will take steps to remove barriers to affordable housing development. By allowing affordable housing in land that is zoned for commercial, publicly owned lands, and church owned lands, Oregon would greatly increase opportunity for affordable housing developers. Finding a parcel that is viable for development, close to amenities our low-income community needs, can be a significant challenge and is often enough to sink affordable housing developments before they begin. SB 8 will make it much easier to build affordable housing and give developers greater choice in finding a site that best serves their future residents. It will make new affordable housing available to low-income Oregonians.

The density bonus for affordable housing and the expansion of protections for an affordable housing development challenged to the Land Use Board of Appeals (LUBA) would make it more difficult for neighborhoods to shut out affordable housing through zoning and appeals to the LUBA. Low density zoning has historically been used to keep "undesirable" elements (low-income people and people of color) from moving into wealthy white neighborhoods. Bienestar's very first development, Elm Park, was challenged in a similar way and would have been barred from Forest Grove had the State not overturned the City's decision. The truth is that inequity endures to this day, and zoning rules are often a tool used to perpetuate it. SB 8 gives more power to developers of affordable housing, who can advocate for the residents who will come to call those developments home.

Bienestar urges you to support SB 8 on behalf of the many community members across Oregon who still don't have safe, stable housing. We strongly support SB 8 and believe it will create positive change for our community.

Sincerely,

Nathan Teske, Executive Director
Bienestar