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March 16, 2021

Sen. Kayse Jama, Chair
Senate Committee on Housing & Development Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 8 (Affordable Housing)

Dear Chair Jama and Committee Members:

1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 40 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice. Our work includes ensuring that the promise of Oregon's land use Goal 10, Housing, is implemented inside our cities and towns with policies that both encourage and require needed, diverse, and affordable housing choices for all.

1000 Friends of Oregon generally supports SB 8; because we understand amendments are coming, we will address the overall elements we believe are particularly important to match affordable housing needs to the lands inside our cities and towns, recognizing some of the bill's specific provisions might change.

SB 8 bill streamlines the ability to site affordable housing, as defined in the bill, inside urban growth boundaries, including on lands zoned for commercial use or owned by a public entity or religious institution. Among other things, SB 8 does this by limiting the standards and conditions of approval that local governments may apply to this affordable housing. While local governments may still apply site review to developing these lands with affordable housing, other approval processes to actually use the land for this purpose would be skipped.

Commercial lands, in particular, are often well-located. We know that the nature of how we shop is changing, a trend accelerated by the Covid pandemic. This is leaving many commercial sites under-utilized, yet these land already have infrastructure. Allowing housing to be located or co-located in a mixed use development could both revitalize some commercial areas and provide more affordable housing near other services and amenities.

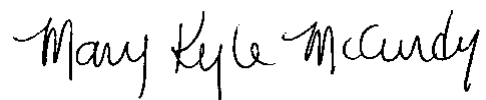
The bill's density bonus provisions offer a way to allow slightly higher densities for affordable housing that is still be within the scale of the surrounding area – through using the higher of a city's existing density bonus, if it has one, or the scaled modest increases in the underlying residential zoning specified in the bill.

Senate Bill 8 bill clarifies that its provisions do not apply to lands that that cannot be adequately served by water, sewer, storm water drainage, or streets; have a slope of 25% or greater; are within 100 year flood plain; or are constrained by land use regulations relating to natural disasters and hazards or natural resources.

Senate Bill 8 will make it easier for affordable housing providers to find and develop suitable parcels that are located where families need to be – near schools, stores, services, and jobs – in other words, in their communities.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director