



HOUSING ALLIANCE

February 9, 2021

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

Dear Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Morgan, Vice Chair Campos, Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance to express our support for HB 2918, which will take a step forward to identify surplus lands which may be suitable for affordable housing.

The Oregon Housing Alliance is a coalition of more than 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 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 affordable 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 deserve a safe, stable, and affordable place to call home.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we knew that already, too many seniors, families, and people who experience disabilities were paying too much of their income towards rent, and were experiencing other forms of housing instability. 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. The wildfires that impacted our state this summer meant the loss of many thousands of homes, including many that provided an affordable home to thousands of seniors and people with low incomes.

Investments in housing opportunity, especially for people with the lowest incomes, are an essential part of Oregon's response to the housing challenges our communities are facing. Since 2015, we have been working to invest state General Obligation bonds to build more regulated affordable homes that will be available to people with the lowest incomes in our communities, and we have continued to use any available federal resource to build homes in our communities.

Affordable housing developers across Oregon are working hard in their communities to identify land that is suitable to build safe, stable, and affordable homes on. They work to identify land that is close to opportunities such as a grocery store, transit, schools, or other community assets

Contacts: Alison McIntosh, amcintosh@neighborhoodpartnerships.org; (503) 816-2882
Loren Naldoza, lnaldoza@neighborhoodpartnerships.org; (503)226-3001 x104
www.oregonhousingalliance.org

like parks or libraries. We know that in some communities, land that is suitable for affordable housing and is available for purchase may be in short supply. As an example of the potential opportunity in surplus lands, a transit agency may purchase more land than is necessary to complete and stage transit projects, and once the project is complete, land may be available and suitable for affordable housing. Providing additional information on surplus lands would allow a developer to assess suitability, and potentially begin conversations with cities, counties, and other agencies about purchasing the surplus lands.

Prior to 2015, the Legislature created a workgroup – the Affordability, Balance, and Choice workgroup – which included homebuilders, realtors, bankers, affordable housing developers, and advocates, and Legislators. The workgroup identified many policies which could potentially make a difference in our work to expand housing opportunity. As a result of that workgroup, in 2015, the Legislature considered, and passed HB 3524¹. HB 3524 required that when the state moved to sell surplus lands, non-profit affordable housing developers who have registered with the state are allowed to receive 30 days advance notice, before other interested parties.

Since the passage of HB 3524, developers of affordable housing have come to realize that we need to take additional steps forward in order to truly give affordable housing developers additional opportunity to purchase surplus lands. HB 2918 is a next step forward in this discussion to increase the availability of information related to surplus lands.

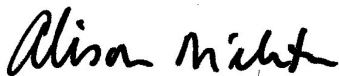
Many other states have worked to advance housing opportunity through changes to their surplus land policies:

- Florida requires that every three years, each county has to prepare a list of all surplus lands that could be appropriate to use as affordable housing;
- California has required agencies to give priority to affordable housing when disposing of surplus lands; and
- King County, Washington recently developed a database of all publicly owned land, and the City of Seattle has passed ordinances prioritizing the use of affordable housing for surplus land.

We know how to build safe, stable, and affordable apartment homes, and we can create more of them in our community. We know that we can expand housing opportunity around the state and create homes that will be affordable for generations to come. We urge your support of HB 2918.

Thank you very much for your time, and for your service to our state during these challenging times.

Sincerely,



Alison McIntosh
On Behalf of the Oregon Housing Alliance

¹ <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/HB3524/Enrolled>

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Housing Alliance Members

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Aging in the Gorge
Benton Habitat for Humanity
Bienestar
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BRIDGE Housing
Business for a Better Portland
CASA of Oregon
Central City Concern
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Community Alliance of Tenants
Community Development Partners
Community Housing Fund
Community Partners for Affordable Housing
Community Vision
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Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East
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Home Forward
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Housing Development Center
Housing Oregon
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Impact Northwest
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NeighborImpact
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Network for Oregon Affordable Housing
Northwest Housing Alternatives
Northwest Pilot Project
Oregon AFSCME Council 75
Oregon Coalition of Christian Voices
Oregon Center for Public Policy
Oregon Coalition on Housing & Homelessness
Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
Oregon Food Bank
Our Children Oregon
Partners for a Hunger-Free Oregon
Portland Community Reinvestment Initiatives
Portland Homeless Family Solutions
Portland: Neighbors Welcome
Proud Ground
Raphael House
REACH CDC
Residents Organizing for Change (ROC Oregon)
Rogue Action Center
Rose CDC
St. Francis Shelter
St. Vincent de Paul of Lane County, Inc.
ShelterCare
Sisters Habitat for Humanity
Sponsors, Inc.
SquareOne Villages
Street Roots
Think Real Estate
Transition Projects
Washington County
Welcome Home Coalition

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