



Sightline Institute is an independent think tank working to advance sustainability in the Pacific Northwest. We believe it exists at the intersection of environmental health and social justice. We're writing in support of HB 2558.

HB 2558, like HB 2001 before it, starts from a simple premise: that Oregon has more homeseekers than homes, and we should do something about that.

Our scarce housing market is like a cruel game of musical chairs. If we, as a state, collectively fail to bring enough chairs to this game, then when the time comes for us all to scramble for a seat, those of us with the least access to money and power are going to wind up with nothing. This is exactly what we've been seeing in Oregon for years now. Bidding wars, small inventories and low vacancy rates are very real, especially in this pandemic. But they are just the mechanics of that process.

An essential ingredient of solving our problem—not the whole recipe, but an essential ingredient—is for more homes to exist. Letting homes exist is good for our economy, for the environment upon which our economy depends, and for the millions of people who make up Oregon's economy.

This is a modest bill. **It would make our tax dollars go further by allowing more Oregonians to live within an easy walking distance of major public investments.** It would achieve this simply by allowing more property owners and future residents to do what they want, if they want. The height bonus also gives builders a reason to want what I think we want: economically integrated communities, with mixed-income housing, near good transit.

I probably don't need to spell out the environmental benefits of making it legal for more people to live near high-capacity transit. Even if we can rapidly transition to electric vehicles, the IPCC estimates that we'll *also* need to drive 20 percent less, on average, to bring 2050 carbon emissions down to civilization-preserving levels. There's only going to be one way to achieve that: more proximity, especially to mass transit.

Opponents of this bill have made two broad arguments:

- A few cities argue they are already dealing with a pandemic and this is no time to force them to allow more housing near major public investments. They say this even as one of the main crises of the pandemic is to keep Oregonians in homes they can afford. Though zoning action now will not house people in the current crisis, it will mitigate future crises. **The best time to allow more housing near transit was decades ago; the second best time is today.**

- Lane Transit District argues that this law will lead some NIMBY homeowners to oppose transit expansion. It may well be inevitable for NIMBY homeowners to oppose the legalization of more and lower-cost housing types near them. If those homeowners prove victorious, the transit line will serve little public purpose and shouldn't be built. **This bill would not force any public conversation that isn't already necessary.** It leaves cities plenty of flexibility during that conversation.

It should be legal for Oregonians to live near transit if they want to. Please pass HB 2558.

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