



September 27, 2023

Representative Pam Marsh, Chair
House Committee on Climate, Energy & Environment
United States Department of Transportation
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jeffrey Dalin, and I am the Mayor of Cornelius, a city with a population of 14,398. We are a majority-minority community with over 50 percent of our population identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Multigenerational families live together, and most residents commute 29 minutes to work daily. In fact, roughly 6,000 of our community members leave Cornelius every day for work, most far afield, while only about 300 stay for their jobs.

We have one bus line. It runs every 13 minutes. To meet the CFEC guidelines around parking, we need the bus to run every minute for nearly 24 hours a day.

To be clear. We fully support creating access to more affordable housing, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and ensuring future developments advance equity in our community. Those values are familiar to Cornelius. Those values guided our approach to growth when, in 2019, we adopted a Town Center Plan that increases density, and we have worked with our regional partners on a Bus Rapid Transit Project that could benefit our residents.

However, since the adoption of the CFEC rules - and now with the direction under HB 2001 and the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis - our work to meet the needs of our community has become derailed by regulations that are too prescriptive and do not recognize the geographic or demographic landscape of our city.

I appreciate that the staff at DLCD are trying to carry out the direction of the Commission. The concepts on paper are ambitious, as we all should strive to be. However, no staff or Commission member has accepted our invitation to visit Cornelius so we can demonstrate why their rules do not work here.

For example, there is a lot of focus on expanding the urban growth boundary to develop and meet housing capacity needs. We can't grow our UGB because we are surrounded by protected farmland. We respect that protection, but any amendments to expand the UGB do not help us.

With constrained land, we have very limited opportunity to address our revenue challenge, which is unlike any other city in this region. Our city has a major revenue challenge. In just a couple of years we project our expenses – with incredibly lean staffing – to exceed revenues, with no option to increase assessed property value or revenue. We want to – and do – support affordable housing, but we simply cannot afford the exempted property taxes. We have goals for our community that we are not able to achieve with our very low assessed property values.

My point in testifying today is to suggest that with the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis underway, now is the time to reset the process and to inform how rules are created to carry out the direction of HB 2001 to prioritize housing development - AND to use that process to realign CFEC to reflect factual data and recognize the unique situations communities like Cornelius are in.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey C. Dalin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeffrey Dalin
Mayor