

Submitter: Kaarin Knudson

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB2889

Good morning, Chair Dexter, Vice Chairs Gamba and Helfrich, and members of the Committee.

My name is Kaarin Knudson, and I am a registered Architect and Urban Designer, non-tenured Instructor of Planning and Architecture at the University of Oregon, and the Founding Director of Better Housing Together, a community-led, multi-sector housing advocacy organization in Lane County. Better Housing Together's mission is to work collaboratively to increase housing affordability, diversity, and supply. From 2022-2022, I volunteered on the Middle Housing Technical Advisory Committee associated with HB 2001 and also on the DLCD Housing Capacity Workgroup last year.

I'm joining you from Eugene to support for your continued work on HB 28-89. I'd like to underscore the importance of this effort and your continued focus.

Eugene and our metro area faces one of the worst housing crises in the nation, by many metrics. The worst per capita instance of homelessness in the nation—something caused by our severe lack of available and affordable housing. Our rental vacancy is among the very worst in West, with recent vacancy reported at 1.5%. A full 50% of our metro area residents struggle to meet basic needs, and median housing prices are near double what median-incomes can afford.

The lack of appropriate, affordable housing is a crisis in Lane County. The combination of local opposition to housing, high housing costs, relatively low wages, minimal vacancy, housing under-production, and a high instance of homelessness present a unique and systemic challenge. We need many more tools and actions, and we need local and state support. Our community is not on track to meet our housing needs and does not yet have clear guidance or agreement on what those production needs actually are. We need continued focus, collaboration, and investment in this work.

Oregon's communities face a structural housing crisis and while our state is not alone in this unfortunate distinction, but we are singularly responsible for taking action to address it. It's very difficult if not impossible to see progress without clear goals and priorities, particularly when facing a circumstance as complex as our housing crisis.

My hope is that this bill will be written in a way that improves housing policy at state and local levels and helps our communities to align housing production with

community needs. Support in how we calculate our housing need is critical, and the continued work to support how and when communities utilize this information to actually build housing is equally important.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony this morning and to support your continued work to build real housing solutions.

Kind regards,
Kaarin Knudson, AIA

Founding Director, Better Housing Together