

Submitter: Wendy Byrne

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1051

I urge to you oppose SB 1051

Oregon's communities need more housing for families with incomes below or at the area median. Instead of the urban sprawl that SB 1051 proposes, let's focus on tools proven to quickly produce more housing that's well-located near schools, stores, transit, and parks – allowing more diverse and affordable housing in every neighborhood, expedited processes for housing development, and funding for infrastructure, all inside UGBs.

SB 1051 undermines the sensible planning tool of urban reserves by allowing premature UGB expansion:

Urban reserves are predetermined areas where a UGB will expand if and when there's a demonstrated need for additional urban land. They are outside a UGB and are not a guarantee of a UGB expansion. Urban reserves allow cities to do long-range infrastructure, financial, and land use planning for a city's future.

SB 1051 undermines cities' urban reserve planning processes:

Through thoughtful community-wide processes, local governments have designated urban reserves in many areas, such as around the Portland metro UGB and cities of the Rogue Valley. This bill undermines those public efforts.

The bill is contrary to the urban reserve provisions in HB 2001, just passed by the House by a large and bipartisan margin:

The provisions of the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis (OHNA) in this year's HB 2001 provide an easier path for all cities to designate urban reserves and use them when a UGB expansion is needed. We support that. SB 1051 negates this thoughtful provision and undermines the trust that participants put into that bill.

The current land use process to expand UGBs works quickly:

From 2016 to 2021, Oregon's cities approved 35 UGB expansions – almost all of them completed at the city level, in well under a year, with no appeal (only two were appealed). If cities face a need for any type of housing, the current, comprehensive process works; there is no need to bypass the law.

SB 1051 risks distracting cities from more effective, comprehensive housing solutions:

Even if a city ultimately denies a private landowner's petition, the process takes time and effort from more immediate housing solutions that deliver workforce housing

where people need it – throughout a city, in every neighborhood. It also risks taking the pressure off cities to meaningfully increase diverse and affordable housing options where people need and want to live: inside UGBs near work, school, shopping, and more.

SB 1051 risks “bait and switch:”

The bill requires an agreement from a city “to ensure” that all urban services will be provided within two years of a UGB expansion – an ambitious and probably unrealistic time frame for building the needed pipes and roads. What happens if the infrastructure is not provided, at all or on time? Failure to deliver the infrastructure could break the commitment to build workforce housing, and puts the underlying purpose of the bill at risk, leaving up to 200 acres of land available for any type of private development.

These UGB expansions will be driven by individual private landowners, not a public process:

Urban reserves are vetted through a broad public process and are mutually designated by a city and county, often with a concept of how and when the land would be used if it were added to the UGB. SB 1051 would allow an individual to attempt to override the will of the community.

Cities under 3,500 in population could expand into an urban reserve for any use: The bill is essentially a free pass for smaller cities to expand their UGBs by up to 200 acres for any use – industrial, commercial, or housing – with no affordability requirements, just upon the request of a landowner, without showing need. This undermines sensible urban planning, threatens farm land, enables sprawl, and will not lead to housing for people with middle and lower incomes

Oppose SB 1051!

-Wendy Byrne  
Corvallis, OR