



March 22nd, 2023

ATTN: Economic and Small Business Committee

RE: House Bill 3317

To Whom It May Concern,

The Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce submits this letter in support of House Bill 3317 (HB3317). HB3317 intends to address the two largest issues facing Wallowa County businesses – workforce housing and workforce development. These issues have inhibited local businesses of every type and size from economic growth and the ability to expand services.

Potential employees want to fill vacant positions and, in many instances, have accepted job offers, yet ultimately are unable to fill the positions due to lack of housing. This applies both to those that desire to purchase a home and those looking for rentals. This lack of housing impacts workforce at a vast variety of position levels, including both year-round and seasonal staff.

One example is our local hospital, which has had 30 position vacancies for over two years. Restaurants have closed their doors or limited their hours, not because of a lack of business but because of a lack of staff to serve customers. Again, potential workers want to fill these positions, yet are unable to secure a place to live.

The mission of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce is to promote business development in Wallowa County, which encourages job creation, business growth, and workforce retention. We promote Wallowa County as a destination for visitors – a vital customer base for many businesses in Wallowa County. To continue to fulfill our organization mission, the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors established the following goal as part of our strategic planning process at the beginning of 2022 –

- Goal 1: To participate in discussions and support efforts in identifying solutions to workforce housing challenges in Wallowa County.

We are committed to supporting locally driven solutions to the lack of workforce housing in Wallowa County and we fully support this bill.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Jennifer Piper". The signature is written in a cursive style and is enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

Jennifer Piper
Executive Director

Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce

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