

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 977

Senate Committee on Housing and Development

March 29, 2023

- Good morning Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:
- My name is Oscar Arana and I work at the Native American Youth and Family Center where I serve as the Community Development Director.
- Thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning in support of Senate Bill 977.
- SB 977 will resolve a current major challenge that limits the ability of organizations, like NAYA, to develop affordable housing that also includes community-serving commercial spaces – such as small business storefronts, childcare centers, and health clinics.
- Just last year - NAYA, Community Development Partners and the Siletz Tribe completed Mamook Tokatee: a 56-unit affordable housing development in the Cully neighborhood. The housing project offers both a tribal and artists leasing preference to its residents – the first of its kind in Oregon.
- The original project vision was to have a section of the first floor to create a retail opportunity so resident artists could easily sell their art – and earn income.
- Current limitations prevented us from doing so and instead we had to shift our vision into creating an art studio where residents can create and showcase are, but not be able to sell or earn any money if they wanted to do so.
- Mamook Tokatee is located on the commercial corridor Cully. By not being able to offer a commercial space at this site it was a missed opportunity for the residents, and the neighborhood.
- We are missing out on creating local jobs, as well as loss of skills and income development that come from being able to operate a commercial space.
- Also, prevailing-wage commercial construction jobs were not created because we had to exclude the commercial space and therefore we did not pay prevailing wages for any part of the project.
- These are lose-lose outcomes that do not benefit construction workers or the residents seeking affordable housing.
- Please pass Senate Bill 977 to ensure that all affordable housing projects can access this important cost-saving measure. This will also create new opportunities for workers to earn prevailing wages by building commercial spaces alongside affordable homes.

- This strikes the right balance between supporting workers with higher wages for commercial construction, while ensuring that we can afford to build homes for workers and low-income households.
- Thank you.