



Native American Youth and Family Center

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March 29, 2023

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Re: Senate Bill 847 – Support

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Oscar Arana and I serve as the Community Development Director at the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA). Founded by the community, for the community, the NAYA Family Center is rooted in sustaining tradition while building cultural wealth. We provide culturally specific programs and services that guide our people in the direction of personal success and balance through cultural empowerment. Our continuum of lifetime services creates a wraparound, holistic healthy environment that is Youth Centered, Family Driven, and Elder Guided. I write today in support of Senate Bill 847, specifically, I would like to emphasize Section 22 of the bill.

Specifically, on page 25 of the bill, Article 22 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 – an earn income. However, 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 art, but not be able to sell or earn any money if they wanted to do so.

Mamook Tokatee is located on a commercial corridor in the Cully neighborhood located in North Portland. 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 847 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. On behalf of the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), we urge your support and passage of Senate Bill 847.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Oscar Arana', written in a cursive style.

Oscar Arana
Director of Community Development