

Submitter: Ben Stevenson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

Dear Chair Fahey and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

I write today to express my opposition to HB 3414: the bill guts environmental protections without any guarantee of addressing our state's affordable housing crisis. Section 2 of HB 3414 compels cities to exempt developers from following environmental protections, even if they construct buildings that do not benefit the broader community. All requests to develop land for housing—regardless of their affordability, increase of housing units, or environmental impact—must be granted under this bill. This will doubtlessly result in widespread destruction of natural areas across the state for the profits of real estate, at the cost of our public access to the environment and our efforts to provide affordable housing. The extreme measures that HB 3414 requires cities to go to in order to defend land use regulations exacerbates this problem.

As a high schooler, a climate activist, and a proud Oregonian, I have seen firsthand the benefit of our state's integration of nature into urban areas. Urban green space is essential for resilience to extreme heat, flood protection, shade equity, mental health, and for teaching the youth in my generation to care about the environment. Few cities do a better job of this than Portland (although the benefits are not distributed equally across race and class). The world we must create is one where the needs of people and planet are prioritized. Where access to housing and the environment are not pitted against each other, but are both seen as human rights. But HB 3414 does not bring us closer to this world. Rather, by eliminating land use regulations and allowing development regardless of community benefit, the bill perpetuates the same problem that propels the housing crisis: development that puts profit over people.

Chair Fahey and Members of the Committee, I compel you to oppose this bill. Please remove section 2 and do further research on more effective and more humane ways to combat houselessness that maintain the integrity of our land use laws. I understand the desire to solve the housing crisis as soon as possible, but that does not give us as a society free rein to advance false and harmful solutions that will only end up harming Oregonians.

Thank you for your service to our state, and for taking the time to consider my comments.

Sincerely,

Ben Stevenson
Senior, Cleveland High School