

Submitter: Roberta Cade

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

While I am in support of the infrastructure funding and climate-smart housing incentives of SB 1537, I strongly oppose the provision that allows large urban growth boundary (UGB) expansions without regard for Oregon's land use laws. Here's why:

- The land use program has delivered! Oregon's cities already have well more than 10,000 acres of vacant land, designated for residential use, inside their UGBs. These lands need investments in some or all infrastructure – roads, sewers, water, sidewalks – to unlock them for housing production.
- Investing in these lands is the most effective step the state can take now to quickly make large parcels “shovel-ready” for producing housing.
- Lands inside current UGBs should not have to compete with UGB expansions for scarce infrastructure dollars.
- Spending limited infrastructure dollars goes further and faster inside UGBs to produce more houses than spending those dollars in a UGB expansion. Residential lands already inside UGBs are often closer to existing infrastructure or have some infrastructure in place, but need just a bit more. This means less cost and less time to get more homes on the ground than through a UGB expansion.
- Adding more land at the edge exacerbates existing infrastructure funding gaps and fails to make the most of the land we have. It's not an efficient use of public dollars and it's not fair to the communities that already have lands waiting for those investments.
- Building at the edge puts more people farther away from the services, stores, and jobs they need. That requires more driving, which makes living at the edge much less affordable.
- Building at the edge exacerbates inequality and racial and economic injustice. Housing policies should open up existing neighborhoods to those who have been racially redlined and economically excluded from areas of opportunity: people with lower incomes, people of color, Black people, Indigenous people, and people on fixed incomes.
- More driving means more greenhouse gas emissions, more roads and pavements, heat islands, and stormwater runoff that ends up in rivers and streams. It paves over carbon-sequestering farmlands and natural areas.
- Building at the edge increases climate change and wildfire risks to lives, livelihoods, and homes.

Please, amend SB 1537 to remove the provision that bypasses land use laws to allow large UGB expansions. It's a distraction from real solutions to our housing crisis.