

Submitter: DAWN BANKS

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

While SB1537 contains incentives for climate-smart housing and infrastructure funding, I OPPOSE this bill in its current state because it also provides for the expansion of Urban Growth Boundaries as a means of addressing the high cost of housing.

There are more than 10,000 acres of vacant land, designated for residential use, inside the UGBs of Oregon cities. Before expanding the UGBs, funding should be spent unlocking the potential, usefulness and desirability the existing residential acreage within current boundaries.

Residential lands within current UGBs are close to existing infrastructure, or have some infrastructure already in place. Investing in the infrastructure on these lands is more time effective and less costly to make large parcels ready for producing housing.

Public dollars should be invested in uplifting existing communities and residential acreage within the current UGBs. Meanwhile, housing policies should be addressing existing neighborhoods to create equitable opportunity for those who have been racially and/or economically excluded.

Extending the UGBs puts more people farther away from services, stores, and jobs, requiring more driving, and increasing - not reducing - the cost of living. More driving means more greenhouse gas emissions, more pavement and heat islands, and more storm-water runoff polluting rivers and streams. The reduction of farmlands and carbon-sequestering natural areas increases climate change and wildfire risk.

Studies have not definitively shown that expanding UGB's reduces housing costs. SB1537 should be amended to remove the provision that bypasses land use laws to allow large UGB expansions. Effective use of existing lands within the current UGBs is a smart solution to our housing crisis. Obliterating the land use laws which have, for the last 50 years, supported Oregon's unique beauty and quality of life, is not a smart solution.