



HOUSING SENIORS | CREATING HOPE | PILOTING CHANGE

February 7, 2024

Members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: **Support for SB 1537**

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony, on behalf of Northwest Pilot Project, in strong support of SB 1537. This bill is a crucial first step in addressing the urgent need to produce over 440,000 units statewide in the next 20 years to keep pace with demand.

Northwest Pilot Project (NWPP) is a social service agency with over five decades of experience in providing housing stabilization services to low and very low-income older adults, age 55 and over, experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Multnomah County. Our extensive experience in service provision throughout Multnomah County has given us a strong vantage point to understand the urgent need for expanded production of deeply affordable housing units, both in the Portland Metro Area as well as statewide.

Oregon is experiencing one of the highest rates of homelessness in the nation and has a current shortage of approximately 110,000 units for extremely low-income households.¹ Additionally, the rate of growth among the senior population in Oregon will outpace the national statistics, with the proportion of older adults expected to reach 22% by 2030.² Despite the growing senior population and the increasing need for accessible housing, research indicates that there is a “startling scarcity of units in the U.S. housing stock that are suitable for aging[:] . . . fewer than 4% of housing units could be considered livable by people with moderate mobility difficulties, and a miniscule fraction are

¹ 2023 Preservation Profile: Oregon, National Housing Preservation Database, January 2024.
https://preservationdatabase.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/PD-Profile_2023_MERGED-OR.pdf

² Oregon’s Demographic Trends (Oregon Department of Administrative Service: Office of Economic Analysis, July 2019),
https://www.oregon.gov/das/OEA/Documents/OR_pop_trend2019.pdf

wheelchair accessible.”³ It is more critical than ever that we invest in building more housing units for our most vulnerable community members. The Governor’s proposed investment of \$500 million in resources to expedite and increase housing production will make significant progress towards the statewide annual production target to produce 36,000 housing units per year.

SB 1537 is bold and we also know that it is imperfect, but because we are in a significant housing crisis, we must take a different approach to accessing the land resources needed to build housing. The bill clearly outlines several conditions that address some of the concerns around land use issues including that the land *"could only be urban reserve, non-resource land, or exception land – not high value farm or forest land except land in urban reserves already designated for future urban development;"* and *"30% of all housing units must be legally restricted for affordable housing."*

As a social service provider working with homeless older adults, Northwest Pilot Project is acutely aware that significantly increasing the availability of affordable housing statewide is critical to addressing our homelessness crisis. This ambitious bill will help us achieve that goal by making more buildable land available throughout the state. We strongly encourage your support of SB 1537. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Laura Golino de Lovato
Executive Director
Northwest Pilot Project

³ Housing for an Aging Population (Housing Policy Debate, July 2016), Sewin Chan and Ingrid Gould Ellen.
https://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/Housing_for_an_Aging_Population.pdf