

February 6, 2024

Chair Jama  
Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 1537 – Housing Production Program---Oppose unless amended

Chair Jama and Members of the Committee,

MCAT (Mobilizing Climate Action Together) is a community of volunteers working to ensure that Oregon builds a healthy climate and a green-energy economy for future generations. We oppose this measure unless amended.

We know housing is a crisis issue especially for low and lower-income Oregonians. We appreciate the weeks of negotiation. But there are two major problems with the bill.

The Urban Growth Boundary system is not broken. The creation of the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis has streamlined the system and provided support for cities who lack staff to do the analysis. In addition, the creation in this bill of the **Housing Accountability and Production Office (HAPO)** will assist local governments with model codes and technical assistance and investigate and mediate complaints of violations to housing laws.

We are grateful that the Urban Growth Boundary in the current bill requires justification for need, but it still provides an exemption for too large an area (75-150 net acres) with a relaxed affordability requirement that will last for up to 10 years.

Please amend this section and allow the improvements in the bill to move the UGB application and implementation process forward. If a release valve is needed for income strapped coastal towns insert an exemption of 5-10 acres. Remember, cities such as Bend expanded its UGB in 2016 yet very little of it has been developed in 8 years. The roadblock is infrastructure.

I've worked on climate change for over 30 years. Frankly, the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) is finally getting their planning and directives aligned to address both climate and housing needs. We need the enforcement component of HAPO to make this happen. We also know that we need housing where there are services and transportation options from walking to transit, especially for low-income families who cannot afford a car in addition to other equity issues.

The second roadblock is up to 10 variances or exemptions from local land use and building regulations per project. While some extremely important regulations have been exempted from this process, many others have not. Set-backs and building heights are examples of these variances and are limited in degree of variation, but long-debated and negotiated compromises to get regulations that make sense for each region should not be thrown out. **Please amend this section to lower the number of variances allowed and exempt key local regulations from this process.**

We need this bill to jumpstart the infrastructure improvements within our city's boundaries from sewers, to roads, to cleaning brownfields. We need this support primarily to require the building of truly affordable housing that has covenants that last for 30-60 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Catherine Thomasson, MD

On behalf of the steering committee of MCAT-Mobilizing Climate Action Together:  
Brett Baylor, Rick Brown, Linda Craig, Pat DeLaquil, Dan Frye, Debby Garman, KB  
Mercer, Michael Mitton, Rich Peppers, Rand Schenck, Jane Stackhouse, Joe Stenger,  
Catherine Thomasson

Thank you for your attention.

**MCAT Steering Committee**

Brett Baylor, Rick Brown, Linda Craig, Pat DeLaquil, Dan Frye, Debby Garman, KB Mercer, Michael Mitton, Rich Peppers, Rand Schenck, Jane Stackhouse, Joe Stenger and Catherine Thomasson