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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

The UGB amendment provision in the bill is laying blame on a familiar scapegoat. Land use and, in particular the UGB, isn't the problem. Every community in the State has provided, or is required to pursuant to LCDC's rules, adequate land for housing (and other community needs).

The land is available. The problem is a lack of financing for larger scale multi-family projects. Financing is expensive and only developers with access to large investors can undertake new large scale developments. Few local builders have that access and fewer still are in the business of building anything but single family dwellings. The residential construction industry is, largely, organized to build only single-family dwellings. The legislature can help to overcome both of these obstacles by creating a low-interest, revolving loan, construction fund program for small businesses to construct three-story or larger multifamily buildings.

Back to the UGB amendment provision, the implication on cities under 25,000 which there are 392 in Oregon, could be profound. For 45 cities, expanding the UGB by 75 acres, would represent a doubling of the size of the UGB. For another 96 cities it would increase the UGB by 50 percent. AND why? In most Oregon cities, outside the metropolitan cities, the need for housing is low. Oregon doesn't need more low-density residential development (5 dwellings per acre which as specified in the legislation for areas outside of Metro). To meet the low-income and middle housing need, Oregon must build more and larger scale multi-family dwellings in locations where owning a car isn't a necessity.

The legislation needs to focus on the development of new housing in climate friendly areas within Oregon's metropolitan communities' downtowns where people want to live, where the jobs are, and the infrastructure is already present to support high-density residential development.