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**LatinoNetwork**

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To: Chair Jama and all members of the Senate Housing Committee  
Re: Support SB 1537  
Date: 2/8/2024

Latino Network was founded in 1996 by advocates for the needs of the growing Latinx community in Multnomah County. Since then, these grassroots beginnings have evolved into a continuum of services that support Latinx individuals, families, and communities. Our programs currently focus on education, advocacy & leadership, health & wellness, economic justice, youth empowerment & violence prevention, and arts & culture, engaging nearly 11,000 community members throughout Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington Counties in the last year. We are the leading culturally-specific provider for Latinx youth, parent, and family services in the Portland area with the goal of serving the nearly 19% of Oregon's population who identify as Latinx or Hispanic.

Latino Network currently provides direct services to youth and families in Senate Districts 13-15 and 19-25 and House Districts 25, 26, 28, 29, 37, 40 and 42-50.

We support SB 1537 because housing is the number one need across our community and many others across the state. Creating the Housing Accountability and Production Office is a great idea to bring under one office all the complex components of housing development. Far too often city government and affordable housing developers can feel like they are working against each other when they should be in partnership to deliver highly needed housing. The rules are complex and the dollars are big, oversight is important but can slow progress if systems are not well aligned and moving towards shared goals.

The funding allocated in this bill is deeply needed and will make a great difference in sparking development of housing of all types which is exactly what we need. The Housing Accountability and Production Office will be an important partner in ensuring that housing is built in all communities, since all communities are in need.

As this moves forward if there are any amendments or changes to the implementation plan we would recommend that there be more flexibility in the site acquisition allowance and include a new regional tax credit allocation plan.

Regarding site acquisition, the bill stipulates that the land being considered for acquisition must meet minimum density requirements before being eligible for state funding assistance. While this makes sense when only thinking about the timeline, the state wants to see quick development and something already zoned and ready is more appealing. However, once land is already rezoned it is likely to also become more expensive and competitive to purchase - which makes it less likely that a bureaucratic application process will be able to move quickly enough. Hopefully for the most part these timelines align well, but there are good reasons why



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acquisition might come before density allowances are fully updated. When there is thoughtful planning and community partnership where it would be more advantageous to acquire the land sooner rather than later. As long as there is a plan for appropriate zoning and density changes the department may want to consider more flexibility and a more localized approach to determining when site acquisition dollars can be approved. If affordable housing developers and community partnership projects have to wait to acquire land, while the private market has no such constraints, we could miss out on lots of opportunities for deeply affordable housing that the market simply will not build. We must ensure affordable housing development, both rental and homeownership are competitive and prioritized in all areas where new development will be allowed to proactively combat displacement and triggering gentrification in adjacent neighborhoods.

The 30% requirement for affordability at 80% of AMI is a great and very strong inclusionary zoning requirement that will serve the community well. But real mixed-income communities must include housing affordable to people with incomes at the 0-30% AMI, which will never be built through market rate development; it is only possible with strategic community-based partnerships with affordable housing developers. Further, in order to achieve the highest degree of affordable housing developments will require tax credit investment. To support public and private partnerships the Oregon Housing and Community Services should consider a regional allocation of tax credits that are projected out at least 2 years. This will give local communities a sense of what they have to compete for and encourage proactive planning to maximize local alignment with affordable housing development goals.

The legislation represents a necessary evolution of our state's approach to housing and land use by addressing the urban growth boundary. Low-income communities historically have not benefited from the state's land use laws. People with low-incomes and people of color communities in our state have been disproportionately impacted by ever increasing housing costs; our existing efforts have simply not done enough as we still see communities of color disproportionately impacted by homelessness, lack of homeownership and in evictions. Linking the value of expanded boundaries to benefits for low-income Oregonians without a runaway land grab is a breath of fresh air and one that begins our journey toward land use planning that is justice-centered.

Please support SB 1537