

Submitter: John Baker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Members of the Senate Committee on Housing & Development, I love living in Oregon, which is why I am contacting you today. I support ensuring there is a home to provide a roof over the head of every Oregonian. For this reason, I strongly urge you to pass SB 1537.

Solving Oregon's housing crisis is Oregonians' #1 priority for the legislature according to a January 2024 statewide poll of Oregonians conducted by American Strategies. That poll found that Oregonians believe there is too little housing for people with low incomes (81%), moderate incomes (76%) and too little single-family homes available to purchase (65%). Moreover, when forced to choose, 67% of Oregonians prioritize producing more affordable housing that meets the budgets and preferences of Oregonians over issues such as preserving open space and reducing carbon emissions.

SB 1537 - including the portions related to the optional, one-time expansion of urban growth boundaries (UGBs) - is a meaningful and essential step towards achieving our shared goal of addressing Oregon's housing crisis. Many cities in Oregon simply do not have enough land to support their housing need, and this bill provides an optional pathway to address the issue of land supply while still protecting farm, forest, and resource lands.

SB 1537 also ensures that at least 30% of the units produced in these optional UGB expansion areas is affordable to low- and moderate-income Oregonians. As any housing developer will tell you, it is usually less expensive to produce affordable housing on undeveloped land in our urban reserves.

Our system of government was intentionally designed to allow real imperfections in our laws to be addressed, not to affirm misconceptions that any law is perfect as written. Given that we are short 140,000 units needed to house our current population it is clear that action is necessary to achieve our shared goal of providing every Oregonian with a place to call home. SB 1537 is your chance to take meaningful action that achieves positive impacts.

Opponents of SB 1537 are attempting to undermine the bill after more than seven months of negotiations with Governor Kotek and her staff. Even after seven of their eight initial concerns were addressed in the bill, they chose to publicly mischaracterize SB 1537 as a "major threat" to Oregon. This mischaracterization is harmful and will only delay action needed to achieve Oregon's common goal of addressing our housing crisis. The real threat to our state is a continued failure to fulfill Oregon's promise to provide an abundance of housing that is affordable for every Oregonian.

I urge you to stand with the vast majority of Oregonians, including people like me, in

supporting SB 1537 so that we can ensure there is a roof over the head of every Oregonian.