



Date: February 8, 2024

To: Chair and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development
From: Scott Bruun, VP Government Affairs, OBI
RE: Support for SB 1537 / Housing Production

Good morning, Chair Jama and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1537.

My name is Scott Bruun, and I am the VP of Government Affairs for Oregon Business & Industry, or "OBI." OBI is a statewide business association representing businesses from a wide variety of industries from each of Oregon's 36 counties. In addition to being the statewide chamber of commerce, OBI is the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation. Our 1,600+ member companies, more than 80% of which are small businesses, employ more than 250,000 Oregonians. OBI's primary mission is to strengthen the business climate in Oregon.

We support the bill as an important step toward ameliorating Oregon's systemic housing supply and housing cost problems. For my testimony I want to focus on just one area: workforce housing.

Our members have been telling us for years that one of their top workforce challenges is the lack of supply and exorbitant cost of workforce housing. Housing supplies are insufficient at every level, including middle-market workforce housing. This problem not only hurts employees or potential employees in Oregon, it also hurts the employers who cannot attract or retain the workers they need. Simply put, our workforce housing crisis hurts the competitiveness and severely hamstrings the potential growth and success of Oregon businesses.

SB 1537 gets at the core of this problem. We can all support Oregon's land use system, but we must also acknowledge that its lack of necessary modernization over the last 50+ years has turned the nation's most progressive land use system into now, arguably, one of its most regressive. This has been particularly harmful to Oregon workers.

SB 1537 makes moderate, thoughtful, and necessary changes to the current system by giving one-time options for cities to bring land into the Urban Growth Boundary. While this is not a permanent solution (because it's not a permanent modernization of our land use system), and while we still need to explore incentives for the support of middle-market housing production, SB 1537 is still a very important and very positive step toward a holistic solution.

OBI urges your support of SB 1537.

Thank you.

Scott Bruun

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