

Submitter: Stephen Brooks

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Chairman Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Committee: I am writing to support SB 1537 in all its particulars. My support is broad-based, however I'd like to focus on two points. First, I believe SB 1537 represents a significant step toward a more integrative approach to housing issues, by tying housing policy more directly to other areas of concern such as economic development, public services, land use, and other issues. Over the last few decades there has been a tendency to treat issues like community development, economic development, and housing as separate specialties rather than as related components of comprehensive community-based planning. This bill begins the process of re-integrating these issues, and I expect it will lead to a more aggregative approach of problem solving - both for housing as well as economic development, etc.

My second comment regards the provisions of SB 1537 relating to temporary modifications to land use rules, and particular UBG adjustments. The original SB 100, which some treat as sacrosanct, was enacted when the State's population barely exceeded 2 million, and the Portland Metro Area population was just over 850,000. Now, the State's population has doubled while the Portland MSA population has tripled. Regardless of how "visionary" the original SB 100 was, the Legislature needs the flexibility to make changes - even wholesale systemic changes - in order to properly address challenges that weren't even considered in 1970. Simply, I believe it's bad policy to treat certain legislative accomplishments as immutable. I believe the UBG adjustment proposals in SB 1537 are very modest, and easily reversed if they turn out to be detrimental. Moreover, for most jurisdictions the changes are unlikely to "move the needle" much in terms of scaled housing development, but can help determine if broader changes are warranted.