



February 8, 2024

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in **support of SB 1537, which contains comprehensive provisions that offer a multi-faceted approach to addressing our state's housing shortage.**

My name is Alberto Gallegos and I am testifying on behalf of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Oregon. SEIU Oregon is composed of SEIU Local 503 and SEIU Local 49, which together represent over 87,000 people. Local 49 represents private sector janitors, property service workers, light manufacturing, and healthcare workers; while Local 503 represents homecare workers, private nonprofit workers, in-home childcare providers, nursing home workers, and state and local government employees.

We believe that every Oregonian should be able to afford rent and have access to a place they call home without having to put in jeopardy their ability to pay for food, child care, transportation, health care, taxes, and other necessities. Unfortunately, more than half our renters cannot afford basic necessities after paying rent since the current cost of housing is unsustainable for working families and BIPOC Oregonians—who are more likely to be renters due to systemic barriers to housing.

One glaring issue that is exacerbating our housing crisis is the lack of affordable housing units in our state. Oregon currently faces a shortfall of 140,000 housing units, and the need to produce over 440,000 units in the next two decades is a stark reality we cannot ignore. Another issue is the lack of affordable housing units in our state, which has led to a high rate of homelessness since Oregonians literally cannot afford to live here. Oregon has one of the highest homelessness rates in our nation and the second-highest rate of unsheltered homeless people.

We believe that SB 1537 represents a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach to addressing Oregon's housing crisis and the aforementioned issues. Its provisions offer practical solutions to our state's pressing challenges, from affordability to homelessness. This bill:

- provides cities and housing developers with a number of tools to streamline the development process
- provides funding in the form of a \$500 million investment package to unlock more housing production
- dictates that 30% of all housing units must be legally restricted for affordable housing within any expansion areas
- provides resources for new affordable housing construction to incorporate energy efficient design, reduce energy costs for low-income residents, and stabilize operational costs for owners



Service Employees International Union – Oregon State Council

These measures will help our communities respond to the crisis of homelessness, improve stability for renters across the state, and take essential steps to resolve our long-standing housing supply challenges.

SEIU Oregon urges the Committee to support SB 1537.

Thank you,

Alberto Gallegos
Political and Government Relations Organizer
SEIU Oregon State Council