



DEVELOPING THRIVING COMMUNITIES

February 9, 2024

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for SB 1537

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Anderson and Members of the Committee:

My name is Karen Saxe and I work at DevNW, an affordable housing development and asset-building agency serving Lane, Linn, Benton, Lincoln, Marion, Polk and Clackamas Counties.

DevNW is in support of SB 1537, which will help agencies like ours in responding to the housing crisis by removing common barriers, and accelerating and improving the efficiency of development.

As I mentioned, DevNW works across a seven county region that includes numerous jurisdictions. This gives us a unique understanding of the extent to which our housing crisis is not isolated to local jurisdictions; it is statewide, and we need statewide solutions to match.

The changes in this bill will give developers a greater level of predictability – across all jurisdictions – that we will get the adjustments we need to create new housing. Navigating unique and arcane land use and site design requirements in each location has led to a slow and cumbersome development process, hampering our ability to put units on the ground. We have to apply for minor adjustments for nearly every project we build, and we should never have to wonder whether a project will be blocked because the landscaping strip next to the driveway is 18 inches too narrow.

We support the Governor’s statewide approach to the entirety of the housing continuum. We see great potential in establishing the Housing Accountability and Production Office. We know that our communities have varying capacity and believe that including technical assistance support for developers and local jurisdictions is critically important.

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As an affordable housing developer, both rental and homes for ownership, we know that housing is needed at all income levels. We support the housing production revolving loan fund as it is a critical source of funding that local jurisdictions could pursue to create housing at levels just outside of what traditional affordable housing funding can develop.

The clients we work with are putting in the hard work to become mortgage ready, they are engaging in financial and homebuyer education and counseling. They are saving for a downpayment, they are paying down debt, they are working to increase their income, all while managing increasing costs for food, utilities and other basic needs. We believe that SB 1537 ensures that jurisdictions and developers can do our part to increase the rate of housing production for these families by providing critical funding assistance for land acquisition and infrastructure needs across Oregon.

We believe increasing the development of affordable housing across the continuum should be our North Star. We know that not every community will be able to, or choose to use, every individual piece in the bill, but we need a wide range of tools and solutions to make a dent in the housing crisis throughout Oregon. Every Oregonian deserves a safe, affordable place to call home.

We applaud the collective commitment to housing in SB 1537 and the hard work by stakeholders, Legislators and the Governor's office in the interim. We believe SB 1537 is a critical step to ensuring housing production goals are realized throughout Oregon and we urge your support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "KSaxe".

Karen Saxe
Director of Policy, Advocacy and Strategic Relationships
DevNW