

Submitter: Maria Vinocur

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

I am strongly opposed to HB 2138. I am opposed to the destruction of our established communities, especially our limited historic homes and communities, and the way that the State of Oregon has gone about adding additional housing. Our Governor and other elected officials have placed the interests of developers over the interests of Oregonians, and Section 22(1)(f) of this bill couldn't make it any clearer.

Oregon has over 138 National Register Historic Districts and thousands of designated homes across our state. I happen to live in one of these Historic Districts. In order for my neighborhood to obtain this designation, volunteers gave countless hours not to mention the expense associated with the process. Historic structures connect us to our past and add to the uniqueness of our communities. Historic structures and districts give us a sense of place and are critical to our quality of life. Cramming in duplexes, triplexes, etc destroys the fabric of our communities and eliminates green spaces. I have yet to see the new homes that have replaced the old ones cost less than the home that was demolished. Demolishing historically significant homes and other buildings does nothing to address the sky high housing prices.

Section 22(1)(f) of the bill makes a complete mockery of National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which was intended protect America's historic and archeological resources. This section of the bill would greatly impact these historic places. It opens the door to unrestricted demolition. This new rule would eliminate the minimal protection of a process that is designed to review and balance the needs of local communities and their historic homes and places.

Demolition review does NOT equal automatic demolition denial. It is a weighing of the public benefit of retention vs replacement. Demolition review is the only protection offered in Oregon - to remove it will nullify Oregon's Land Use Goal 5 for historic resources.

Removing demolition review denies the public a voice (counter to Land Use Goal 1). The community or stakeholder group should have an opportunity to weigh in on places that matter to them and reflect their heritage. Should the developer be the only voice? Once a historic property is demolished, a link to our past is forever gone. Furthermore, demolition works against our climate goals and adds unnecessary waste to our landfills.

The demolition review process has been shown to balance the public benefit and

often has helped create more housing, not hindering it. As written, Section 22(1)(f) has no requirement that middle housing or affordable housing replace the demolished historic structure. It has NO connection to the bill's goal. Historic designation requires rigorous research and vetting to prove cultural significance, and it should not be erased without careful consideration. If this HB2138 passes as it is written, Oregon would be last in the U.S. for stewardship of its heritage places. How can we move the needle for increased housing in heritage areas? Create a better inclusive "both-and" strategy that would add more units within designated historic areas through an incentive package for adapting existing residential, add ADUs, add triplexes on non-contributing properties, etc. As written, this bill is a win for developers and a loss for the rest of us. It is up to us to protect our limited historic resources for future generations. There are ways to provide additional housing and protect our historic resources.