

Submitter: Heidi Hart

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

Dear Chair Marsh and Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

My name is Heidi Hart and I am a renter in the Buckman neighborhood of Portland. I join Portland: Neighbors Welcome in supporting House Bill 2138, which will positively affect Oregon's housing shortage by legalizing more housing across the state with land already available in our cities and towns and cutting red tape that prevents working families from choosing homes that allow them to live affordably in their own communities.

I specifically urge the committee to retain the language in SECTION 22. (1), which repeals the requirement for demolition review for houses which are listed as "contributing" in National Register Historic Districts. This bill would not affect local historic districts, or prevent cities from granting protections to existing National Register Districts. It only removes the requirement that cities delegate their land use authority to these incredibly undemocratic districts. My own neighborhood, Buckman, started the process to become a National Register Historic District over 10 years ago, and is the only neighborhood in Portland to have stopped that process. My neighborhood has around three thousand residents, the majority of whom are renters. A few dozen landowners started the National Register District process, and the only way to stop it once started is for over 50% of the landowners in the proposed district to sign notarized objections by the deadline. Through what must have been a monumental effort by opponents of the district, 348 property owners submitted notarized objections and stopped the district from being established.

Notably, at no point in this process did the input of either the city at large or the input of the majority of the three thousand residents of Buckman who were not property owners matter at all. This legislature has created our state land use policy with the understanding of the reality that when neighborhoods block the diverse housing that we need, that affects the surrounding neighborhoods as well. Our cities are equipped to balance the social, economic and environmental tradeoffs when a historic district is created, but these tradeoffs are not considered at all in the National Register District process. I did not live in Buckman when the historic district was proposed, but even if I had at the time, my opinion would not have mattered at all because I am a renter. I care deeply about my neighborhood and my city, and I care deeply about land use. I believe that my opinion should matter as much as any other resident of my neighborhood and city, but under these National Register Historic Districts, it absolutely does not.

Thank you.