

Submitter: Alyssa Walker Keller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2964

Chair Marsh, Co-Vice Chair Anderson, Co-Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Alyssa Walker Keller and I am a member of Theophilus church. I am writing today in support of HB 2964, and to thank you for your ongoing commitment to making affordable housing a priority in this state.

It is hard to work, learn, and reach one's full potential without the certainty of a place to call home. I am a community organizer with a population that is tremendously impacted by the lack of shelter and affordable housing. This has brought me into relationship with a number of courageous faith communities who are ready to share their land wealth for their community; but in order to make this possible, they need your support now.

There are 2 critical barriers that my small neighborhood church in Clackamas County and in the congregations across East Multnomah county that I have organized with are facing when it comes to developing their land into tomorrow's homes:

- They do not possess the expendable cashflow to cover the surveys, studies, and other predevelopment costs that would determine what they are actually able to do with their land, and

- They need help engaging their neighborhood associations, next-door neighbors and the businesses nearby, to address their questions and turn "not in my back yard" energy into a robust network of support for a future development.

That's why HB 2964 is such a great opportunity - it gives OHCS the ability to grant funds to institutions like churches and nonprofits who need to do pre development work, and it also gives capacity for community engagement work - and that's work that will prevent headaches and slowdowns for a future developer when a neighborhood hasn't been engaged in the process.

The congregations I know in East Multnomah County, Portland, and Clackamas county are situated in areas where there is infrastructure, but available land is scarce. My own congregation could greatly benefit from the financial stability that would come from selling or ground-leasing a portion of our land for affordable housing; yet we simply do not have the tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars needed to assess our capacity to make this dream a reality. And that's what HB2964 could make possible for faith communities like mine. It will make an enormous difference in resolving the affordable housing crisis, the self-sufficiency of congregations who are already doing critical food and social services work in their communities, and will

bring skilled support needed for these congregations to build relationships in their neighborhoods. This bill will help faith communities like mine make the most of their precious land resources.

We are eager to explore how we might best steward this land that has been a home to our congregation. Please help us turn that land into homes for many more generations to come, and vote yes on HB 2964.

Thank you,

Alyssa Walker Keller