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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3190

HB 3190 is a critical measure that addresses longstanding underinvestment in Oregon's historic commercial infrastructure. By expanding access to state preservation funding, the bill recognizes that maintaining culturally significant buildings is not merely an aesthetic concern but an economic, environmental, and civic necessity.

Oregon's historic commercial structures serve as economic anchors, community identifiers, and irreplaceable records of architectural and industrial heritage. HB 3190 provides the financial scaffolding to preserve these assets through targeted grant funding, particularly in rural and underserved urban areas where private capital for preservation is limited or nonexistent.

The legislation aligns with the state's climate and sustainability goals. Preservation and adaptive reuse significantly reduce the embodied carbon cost of demolition and new construction. HB 3190 incentivizes reinvestment in existing buildings, which is materially more sustainable and economically regenerative than replacement.

Support for this bill also acknowledges that Oregon's built heritage is under increasing pressure from market speculation, neglect, and climate deterioration. Public funding ensures that historically significant sites are not preserved only when profitable, but whenever they serve a broader public good.

I urge the legislature to advance HB 3190 as a foundational component of Oregon's preservation policy. This bill is a necessary and overdue tool to protect and reactivate the architectural, economic, and cultural capital embedded in our historic commercial infrastructure.

While HB 3190 is a vital advancement for commercial historic preservation in Oregon, its scope excludes a critical category of at-risk heritage: residential historic properties. I urge lawmakers to introduce a companion bill that expands preservation grant eligibility to include residential structures that meet the same historic criteria outlined in HB 3190.

Many residential buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places, state inventories, or local historic registries—such as those in North East Portland's Walnut Park Historic District—hold profound cultural, architectural, and educational value. These homes are essential elements of Oregon's historical narrative, particularly those associated with marginalized communities and working-class neighborhoods

often absent from traditional preservation efforts.

These properties frequently face financial barriers to responsible maintenance and restoration. Unlike commercial owners, private residents typically lack revenue streams or tax incentives sufficient to offset the high costs of structural repairs, seismic upgrades, or historically accurate restoration. Without targeted state support, the risk of demolition, displacement, or irreversible alteration remains high.

A companion bill would correct this disparity, providing preservation equity and ensuring that Oregon's historical narrative includes not only its commercial cores but the everyday architecture that housed its workers, families, and communities. The legislation should specifically support owner-occupied or culturally significant homes that serve a broader public benefit through their presence, story, and stewardship.

Oregon cannot preserve its historical identity by protecting only what is profitable. Residential historic properties are a public legacy held in private trust. They deserve the same level of investment and protection currently afforded to commercial sites. I urge lawmakers to act accordingly.