



UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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February 12, 2026

RE: Senate Bill 1578

Good afternoon, Chair Pham, Vice Chair Anderson and Committee. For the record, I am Jake Seavert, Union County Commissioner, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 1578.

Union County encompasses over 2,000 square miles and has a population of approximately 26,000 people. Like other counties across Oregon, we struggle with a lack of adequate housing for our working-class residents. We host the best “Rural University”, Eastern Oregon University, which adds competition to the rental market due to limited student housing availability, though we are grateful to have the university and students in our community.

We also have several manufacturing facilities in our county and face challenges in providing rental or temporary housing options for workers during major mill upgrade projects. This led us to amend our local land use policy to allow for the siting of temporary worker housing on Industrial and commercially zoned lands. While this is only a temporary solution, it helps relieve some pressure of the rental market.

I believe the intent of this bill is not only to provide workforce housing options, but also allow county governments to make zoning changes in close proximity to infrastructure – separate from current Urban Growth Boundaries - to develop starter homes and homes attractive to the senior market, with less upkeep and a sense of a small-community living. It is critical that local governments retain approval authority over housing decisions within their jurisdictions.

The 2034 sunset on this bill provides a defined timeframe for a timely response and an economic boost through job creation and increased revenue to the general fund. New construction developments – whether in Burns, Stanfield, or La Grande – enhance the overall appearance of a community and signal economic vitality to residents and visitors traveling through rural counties.

Briefly, the additional dwelling unit provision would allow sons and daughters to return to an existing homestead and build a home no larger than 2,500 square feet to live and participate in the family farm or ranch operation. While options currently exist, this bill would reduce administrative burdens. There should be no reason to require parents or grandparents to leave their homes to live in a 900 square foot ADU, especially when remaining in a familiar floor plan can be important for those facing dementia or Alzheimer’s.

In the interest of time, I again urge your support of Senate Bill 1578.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Jake Seavert
Union County Commissioner