

Dear Committee Chair Keny-Guyer and Members of the Committee on Human Services and Housing,

With regards to the HB 2001 hearing today, I submit the following testimony on behalf of the Better Housing Together Steering Committee and as the initiative's Co-founder and Project Lead:

Based in Lane County, Better Housing Together is a network of 45 local organizations and businesses working together to increase housing affordability, diversity and supply. We use a collective impact model to integrate private and public sector capacity, and we are committed to working collaboratively to address the local housing crisis.

We have reviewed many of the initial positions related to this bill. The argument that housing policy should be left to local jurisdictions would be plausible—if all local jurisdictions were committed to meaningful action.

But what if they aren't?

In Lane County, we face a crisis. The Eugene-Springfield area claims one of the worst housing markets in the state and nation. Almost half of our residents are struggling to meet basic needs. Both rentals and home ownership cost far beyond what many local workers can afford, and housing supply is out of step with demographic needs. The resulting instability harms people in a variety of ways—including compromised health, lost economic opportunity, increased air pollution, decreased school readiness, and a high rate of homelessness. After a year of focused advocacy, we are just beginning to see signs of change.

But the necessary change isn't coming easily or quickly. The City of Eugene is still struggling to take even the first steps to address the structural crisis of affordability—like implementing SB 1051. In Lane County, the State's push has directly supported local public engagement and continues to catalyze local progress. With regards to structural improvements to the current system, it's hard to imagine a near-term in which the State does not initiate and require certain actions. Clear expectations and timelines are needed.

There is no path to broader stability and affordability without more compact, infill housing supply. HB 2001 has details to address, but its hammer is needed. Many voices have been advocating for duplexes and cottage clusters for years, but the conversation changes when in-action is no longer a viable option.

We support the continued development of HB 2001 and the State Legislature's efforts to compel meaningful local action that expands housing affordability and diversity. This action is needed now and for the future.

Respectfully,
Kaarin Knudson, AIA

Project Lead and Steering Committee, Better Housing Together
Principal and Partner, LARCO / KNUDSON