

HHS committee,

For the past 40 years I have professionally studied the evolution of cities, the social dynamics of urban neighborhoods and rural communities, and how public policies too often fail to produce hoped-for outcomes. HB2001 is a poster child for policy failure long before it can even be enacted.

HB2001 is poorly thought out and a radical rejection of modern planning principles, as well as an overturning of decades of progress in Oregon land use law. It proposes to increase the availability of affordable housing, when the scientific evidence and experience of communities shows that it will do just the opposite—increase displacement, gentrification, segregation (by income, ethnicity, age), and social isolation; erode neighborhood character and encourage a loss of place attachment. This would be laughable or maybe just sad, if it weren't so poorly considered and dangerous.

HB2001 will do little good for any but a handful of Oregonians—those engaged in real estate speculation and “development;” although it may also spur the interest of out-of-state actors who want to cash in on the new building gold rush. This sort of “development” in the end requires large-scale demolition, environmental damage, assaults on community, and degradation of shared democratic institutions and expectations. And there is no case to be made that the social costs of this kind of give-away to private interests are warranted by the trickle-down benefits that are unlikely to be realized. The misguided claim that “more housing = affordable housing” is both flat wrong, but seems at best surprisingly uninformed and, at worst, possibly disingenuous and suspicious.

The haste with which this scheme has been proposed and the limited opportunity for public comment or engaged discussion and debate across the state doesn't cry “crisis” so much as “something just doesn't smell right.”

I urge to do what you can to stop this bizarre exercise in legislative jujitsu.

Short of that, I urge you to do what you can to slow this train down so that the public doesn't have to wake up to find Oregon's planning and deliberative institutions in tatters with changes that can't be stopped that tear down existing needed housing and assault neighborhoods across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.

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