

Testimony to the Transportation Subcommittee within Joint Ways & Means on HB 2001

I'm here to speak in strong support of HB 2001 as amended.

Our family moved into our close-in Southeast Portland neighborhood in 1997. Two things attracted us then that we continue to love today: the neighborhood's walkability and access to public transportation, and its mix of housing types: single-family homes, small apartment buildings, duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes: a mix of housing that is illegal in most urban neighborhoods today.

When we moved to Portland, our neighbors were also diverse, in age and income, if not racially.

In learning more about Portland's history, I've begun to understand better that lack of racial diversity, and to appreciate the role that government has to create opportunities for housing equity, or continue to deny them.

And in the two decades that have passed we've also seen economic diversity dwindle around us, as affordable housing options have not kept up with increasing demand for homes near the city center. The neighborhood where seniors, students, artists and families could all afford to live has largely disappeared.

In volunteer work I did recently, I asked Portland residents what they would change about Portland; housing affordability was the nearly unanimous answer. Two people told me they had nearly lost hope of finding a home here and begun to look for a different city to live.

It's time for Oregon to dismantle the land use patterns adopted decades ago that hurt all Oregonians, including our most vulnerable. We have two housing affordability problems: a lack of affordable middle-class housing, and a lack of housing affordable to those living at the bottom of the income scale. If the legislature passes the bill with the current amendments, permitting missing middle homes, those new homes will go a long way to relieve middle-class housing needs. That will allow us to spend affordable housing resources on lower-income and houseless Oregonians who need those resources the most, making our funding dollars go further.

My wife and I raised three kids in our little urban home. They're adults now, and I think a lot about what burden we are leaving them, what opportunities I've had that won't be there for them. The climate crisis is real, immense and urgent. The longer we delay serious action, the greater will be the challenges and sacrifices required of our children and grandchildren. This bill will allow smaller homes and density that will make transit feasible, addressing both of the greatest two contributors to carbon emissions.

My grandparents struggled to provide for their families in the Great Depression. My father fought in the South Pacific. I'm here today because making tough choices and sacrifices is the opportunity for my generation to make a better world for the next.

This is an opportunity for all of Oregon to contribute to affordable housing and reduce our impact on the climate. I hope you will take this opportunity, by passing HB 2001 on for each house of the legislature to consider.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.