

Greetings, Chair Fahey and Committee Members,

My name is Rev. Julia Nielsen and I live in Portland. I am a pastor of Portsmouth Union Church, and we are also active members of the Leaven Community Land and Housing Coalition, a large coalition of faith communities in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington County, leveraging our land and resources so that all Oregonians can come home.

I shared verbal testimony with you all today outlining the heavy need for uniform, streamlined, and expedited processes for communities of faith desiring to develop affordable housing on our land. My own church has finally succeeded in building 20 units of 30% AMI permanently supportive housing on our land after 6 years of effort. Despite offering our land at no cost, situated in the heart of North Portland where displacement is rampant, we found it nearly impossible to complete this project. It was only through sheer inexhaustible will power, constant (near daily) effort, extensive collaboration, and unfortunately the need to change Portland city law that we reached this outcome successfully. No other faith community should have to struggle in this way to house their neighbors in desperate need of affordable, safe housing.

- The reality is religious organizations have extensive access to available, undeveloped land largely in residential areas that can be used to build affordable housing/
- There is a huge cost savings to building using faith land because we already own the land.
- Faith land is already zoned for residential, in almost all cases.
- Allowing faith communities to build affordable housing stabilizes our neighborhoods and is a strong anti-displacement strategy.
- Current land use regulations can be a lengthy process and add cost to these projects. Our own church lost more than two years and over \$50,000 to striving to follow regulations in place prior to the Portland City Council's efforts to simplify them. Please remove regulatory barriers for religious organizations to build on the land we already own.

Your action is crucial. Please approve the HB 2008 so that faith communities across the state of Oregon can build affordable housing on our land with as few barriers as possible.

Our neighbors need your help, creativity and support in leveraging every option and financing stream to begin solving the crisis of housing instability and homelessness in our state.

Respectfully,

Julia Nielsen (and the people of Portsmouth Union Church)