



Everyone deserves a place to call home.

March 15, 2021

Senate Committee on Housing & Development
Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Senator Dennis Linthicum, Vice-Chair
Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Testimony RE: Senate Bill 8 (SB 8)

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of REACH Community Development, a non-profit that has created and sustained over 2,500 affordable rental homes in the Portland metro region. **REACH is supportive of SB 8, allowing affordable housing on land that is zoned commercial, publicly owned lands, and land owned by religious institutions along with provisions for additional density.**

Over the years, REACH has spent significant resources and time seeking zoning changes and variances to local zoning restrictions in order to develop affordable housing in communities that desperately need it. While we recognize that zoning rules serve an important purpose, we have found the rigidity and politicization of many local zoning codes to be a significant barrier to creating more affordable housing where it is most needed. Permitting affordable housing in commercially zoned areas, on publicly owned land, and on land owned by religious institutions will move the state closer to meeting the need identified in the goals set by HB 2003. We need to provide over 550,000 homes in the next twenty years to meet the demand for housing.

As an example, we recently sought a zoning change on a parcel of land immediately adjacent to an existing affordable housing community. The land adjacent to existing affordable housing was zoned commercial. The zoning changes required approval of a local elected body and the proposal was voted down due to vague concerns about the presence of affordable housing anywhere. In fact, there was no opposing testimony from nearby neighbors and the change was voted down despite the fact that local government planning staff had approved and strongly recommended the zoning change. As a result, the future of affordable housing is uncertain and, at best, will be delayed for a year or more and at greater cost.

SB 8 is the kind of forward thinking legislation needed to create more equitable and accessible communities. Even with the passage of SB 8, affordable housing will still have to gain support for its design and be responsive to local planning departments. It is not a "blank check," but this legislation will help strike a better balance statewide with equitable housing development.

Thank you for your deliberation on this important proposal and for considering our voice of support.

Sincerely,

Dan Valliere
CEO, REACH Community Development