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Counties*

March 16, 2021

Senator Kayse Jama, Chair
Senator Dennis Linthicum, Vice-Chair
Senate Committee on Housing and Development
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Linthicum and members of the committee:

Housing Oregon urges the Senate Committee on Housing and Development to support SB 8, which expands on previous legislation in the past five years – including SB 1051 (2017) and HB 2003 (2019) - to remove barriers to affordable housing development and addresses circumstances that continue to limit affordable housing development.

Housing Oregon is a membership-based statewide association of affordable housing nonprofits and community development corporations (CDCs) committed to serving and supporting low-income Oregonians across the housing needs spectrum – from homeless to homeowner. We support and strengthen our members by providing training on industry best practices, peer support networks, communications, and advocacy on local and statewide policy issues.

SB 8 is critically important to our members across the state – nonprofit housing developers who are experts at building safe, stable, and affordable rental housing and homes for sale. Our members must work through complex and long development processes within their respective local jurisdictions.

Considering the homelessness and affordable housing crisis we face in Oregon, the common-sense proposals in SB 8 are a step in the right direction to expand the development of affordable and available homes for low-and middle-income Oregonians. Examples of meaningful but measured steps in SB 8 include:

- Allowing affordable housing in land zoned for commercial, publicly owned lands, and church owned lands.

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- A statewide density bonus for affordable housing allowing affordable housing developers to maximize their impact on land they have access to.
- Expands on protections for housing developers by providing attorney's fees when an affordable housing development is challenged to LUBA and the project prevails.

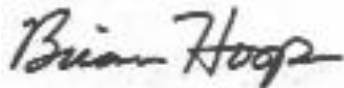
Here are but a few examples of challenges faced by some of our members that, had SB 8 been in effect earlier, would have expedited and limited pre-development costs and delays associated with these projects:

- Farmworker Housing Development Corporation, based in Woodburn, was able to overcome neighborhood opposition this past year to win approval from the Lebanon Planning Commission for a proposed 24-unit rent-restricted apartment. Neighbors had protested the scale, or density, of the three-story complex as well as contending the city had applied the wrong zoning designation. Delays in approval threatened to scuttle the project.
- Northwest Housing Alternatives, based in Milwaukie, likewise faced neighborhood opposition dating back to 2018 to a proposed 148-unit rent-restricted apartment in Northwest Portland. Neighbor opposition delayed the project for several years arguing the 5-story proposal was too big for the surrounding historic district. The project is now scheduled to be completed by fall 2022.
- Mid-Columbia Housing Authority and Columbia Cascade Housing Corporation had invested significant time and resources in the pre-development of a proposed 65-unit rent restricted apartment complex on public property the City of Hood River owned and had intended to use for affordable housing. Unfortunately, neighbor opposition and appeals led to the demise of this well thought out proposal.

Housing Oregon urges members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development to support SB 8, which will provide critical protections and expedite future development of affordable housing. Such housing is an important part of our community infrastructure, and the people who call these apartments home are vital members of our community.

Please feel free to contact me if you have questions at 503-475-6056 or brian@housingoregon.org.

Sincerely,



Brian Hoop
Executive Director
Housing Oregon