

Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, State and Regional Affairs Advisor
In support of SB 1557
Senate Committee on Housing and Development
February 2, 2022



Metro is the elected regional government that serves nearly 1.7 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. We provide a broad range of public services that include land use and transportation planning, solid waste and recycling operations, housing and homeless services, management of parks and natural areas, and operation of major visitor facilities like the Oregon Convention Center and the Oregon Zoo.

Residents across greater Portland continue to face unprecedented challenges caused by rising housing costs without adequate affordable housing options or supports for low-income households. In recent years, government, community, philanthropic and business partners have come together across the region to create local housing solutions. Success in our region requires abundant, diverse, and affordable housing choices in all neighborhoods, especially neighborhoods with access to opportunity. That's why Metro has stepped up over the past few years and, together with our partners, taken meaningful steps to address the housing crisis. Metro took action in 2018 to pass the nation's first regional affordable housing bond to significantly invest in the creation of permanently affordable homes, building on a successful 2016 bond in the City of Portland. And Metro responded again in May 2020 with the nation's largest per capita investment in ending homelessness with a regional supportive housing services measure.

These policies and public investments have already begun to make an impact in our region. However, continued success requires further action at the state level as well. In particular, there are properties whose use restrictions are set to expire in the coming years and may convert to market rate. While the Legislature has taken many steps to maintain these buildings as affordable, some will convert and residents are at risk of displacement. SB 1557 offers a crucial tool by providing a small rental subsidy to offset the cost of the rent increases. This critical subsidy will ensure that tenants remain safely housed and prevents potential homelessness.

Metro urges you to support SB 1557. This targeted, small investment for residents impacted by affordable housing use restriction expiration will help prevent homelessness and ensure that they are able to remain in housing.