

February 2, 2022

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Jama and Members Committee,

I am writing to express the City of Gresham’s support for SB 1557.

The shortage of affordable housing throughout our state continues to impact many residents, particularly those in the midst of the economic challenges during the pandemic. Residents in Gresham have benefited from the existing supply of regulated affordable housing. The City is actively working to increase the current supply of housing, and stabilize existing properties on the verge of expiring affordability contracts. Even with these efforts, approximately 34% of renting households are severely rent-burdened in Gresham, and there are properties in the City at risk of being withdrawn from publicly supported housing.

The Gresham City Council supports efforts to ensure that housing choices are available to people of all incomes and to reduce the number of Gresham households that are burdened by housing costs. The City of Gresham supports SB 1557, which would create a pilot rent subsidy program designed to protect residents of publicly supported housing from displacement when a property’s use restrictions expire, and it transitions to market rate housing. This pilot provides some protection to existing tenants by covering the incremental increase in rent payment as the property transitions to market. This is a stop gap measure designed to keep vulnerable Oregonians housed when the property cannot be preserved.

The City of Gresham’s first priority is to preserve existing properties for the long term. We thank the legislature for its partnership in these efforts, most recently through an investment in Aldercrest Apartments that was at risk of an expiring contract. In the cases where a property is not preserved, we believe this legislation will provide a modest rent assistance to prevent homelessness.

We urge your support for SB 1557.

Sincerely,

Brian Monberg
Government Affairs Manager
City of Gresham