

**Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, State and Regional Affairs Advisor
In Opposition of House Bill 4118
House Committee on Housing
February 14, 2022**



Metro is the regional government for the greater Portland metropolitan area, tasked by Oregon statute with making decisions every six years about how and where the region will grow. Our region has a strong track record of supporting the core purposes of Oregon’s statewide planning system – protecting farms and forests by facilitating efficient urban development, while providing additional room for people and jobs when needed by expanding the urban growth boundary.

For the 2022 session, the Metro Council’s priorities call for supporting legislation to increase housing funding, improve tenant protections, expand affordable home ownership options, increase home ownership for BIPOC households, advance solutions to end homelessness, and provide additional tools and authority to local governments to address housing supply and affordability. We are acutely aware of the importance of addressing the housing needs of all people in our region, especially those with low incomes. However, we believe that we can and should do so within the framework, and with respect for the integrity, of Oregon’s existing land use system.

We have a number of significant concerns with -1 amendments to HB 4118 and have highlighted them below:

The Task Force’s scope of work is enormous, unfocused and unsuitable.

It is attempting to tackle multiple, highly complex issues that each require careful examination and expertise. The breadth and intricacy of housing and industrial land use planning requires separate and distinct task forces, if not multiple task forces given the scope of what is asked to be examined in this amendment.

The Task Force membership leaves out critical expertise and is unduly weighted toward one perspective. Over 40 percent of the task force is composed of cities and while cities provide valuable perspective and knowledge about land use planning, the task force membership leaves out necessary additional expertise. Agriculture, environment, climate, the full breadth of housing providers, community organizations, land advocates, in addition to others, are just a few crucial voices missing from the task force. Comprehensive, diverse membership is necessary for the task force to be successful.

The Task Force’s work is duplicative.

A variety of efforts already exist that are contemplating significant pieces of the task force's scope of work. Notably, through a budget note in 2021, the Oregon Legislature continued the important work started in HB 2003 (2019) around regional housing needs analysis and the agencies have put together a work group to explore a number of the same issues outlined in the task force. In addition, in December of 2021, Sen Wyden announced in the convening of a task force to look specifically at industrial land barriers (as well as a few other things).

As the work of Regional Housing Needs Analysis has only further highlighted, Oregon currently struggles to produce enough housing for all Oregonians, particularly those with low incomes. There are many pieces to the puzzle of housing production, and land supply is a crucial one. It is also just one of them, and any conversations about land supply also needs to acknowledge and address the other barriers facing housing production. In particular, the issues facing land supply already inside the UGB should not be separated from analysis and conversation about barriers to UGB expansion. Land readiness – ensuring that land is ready for housing – is intrinsically linked to land supply conversations because those same barriers exist whether land is inside or outside the UGB.

We continue to be open and eager to have conversations about how to solve our current housing production process, of which land supply is a component. We continue to and have demonstrated our willingness to adapt our own urban growth management system to ensure that it is meeting the housing and employment land supply needs of our region. In the last decade and half, collaboratively with our partners, we have worked to address a number of issues with our process, including:

- financially supported local efforts to make the most of existing land
- adopted a 50-year plan for urban and rural reserves
- required and funded concept planning to ensure that UGB expansions will result in needed housing
- added four well-planned areas to the UGB as proposed by four cities in the region in 2018
- ensured that those areas allow “middle housing” types now allowed under HB 2001
- passed legislation authorizing mid-cycle adjustments to the UGB when necessary
- continuously improved our technical analyses that support growth management decisions
- received voter approval for \$652.8 million to support investments in affordable housing and approximately \$250 million/year for supportive housing services.

This is incredibly complex and challenging work. It requires partnership and collaboration among many parties and we have been most successful as a region and a state when we have tackled those problems together and with fair and balanced participation that includes critical stakeholders like mayors, county chairs, home builders, land use advocates, environmental organizations, housing providers and many others. While it hasn't always been easy, we believe

that we are most successful when we come together as a region and a state to tackle the issues that impact all of us. We look forward to continuing to work together as a region and a state to address these critical issues.