

Submitter: Nils Christoffersen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3138

Wallowa Resources supports the new R3 intergovernmental agency organized under ORS 190, and its aim is to share resources between small cities to assist with capital improvement projects related to workforce housing. Small cities and counties struggle to take projects from concept to completion. R3 will help bridge the gap by bringing specialized expertise, capital equipment, and financing to augment and support their efforts through targeted capacity building. R3 will provide financing, technical assistance, and project management expertise for joint developments and public improvement projects.

In Wallowa County, local businesses and community service providers are understaffed, constraining economic growth and a range of services from health care to public safety. The common barrier to hiring is a lack of available housing, for both seasonal and year-round employment. Wallowa County's 2022 Community Health Needs Assessment identified housing and childcare as critical opportunities to improve Wallowa County's community health and well-being. To help address the local housing shortage, Wallowa Resources has created a subsidiary, Working Homes, LLC, that will focus on providing affordable workforce housing to support the county's economic stability. This new entity will acquire and hold land in trust in order to provide for affordable workforce housing, and will hire staff and raise funds to design, develop, own and manage existing and new workforce housing.

Working Homes LLC would benefit from a partnership with the proposed R3. We're on a steep learning curve. Our new entity, and our local municipal partners, could use support identifying and accessing different forms of financing needed for land acquisition, development and home construction, exploring site development and home ownership models, and identifying key partners for home construction - partners that can move quick, and work within budgets and plans that ensure the housing units are completed at a price point affordable to local residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely, Nils D Christoffersen, Executive Director, Wallowa Resources