



House Committee on Ways & Means
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Testimony relating to DLCD's budget

Honorable Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Founded in 1977, Thrive Hood River is Oregon's oldest regional land use watchdog group. We work with the tools of Oregon's land use system to protect resource lands and to promote good planning policies within our vibrant communities.

I will keep this very brief.

DLCD and the Legislature can, and often have, conceived intelligent policy that lives in the ORS or the OAR. However, two things make substantive chunks of our land use program irrelevant: non-enforcement and esotericism of the codes.

Most counties have anemic enforcement and implementation practices. When code is disregarded or goes unimplemented, it devalues everything DLCD and the Legislature do. For example, the Legislature passed hard-earned laws that allow wineries on EFU lands a few years ago. Today, however, many property owners keep approving wineries under the Commercial Use in Conjunction standards—an old, esoteric standard only understood through a morass of case law that is interpreted by individual counties as they see fit.

Another example is DLCD's push for innovative, demand-side housing policies, such as density bonuses and inclusionary zoning, which are not palatable to many rural communities because they sound like esoteric jargon or because counties and small cities fear they don't have the resources to administer and enforce new code. Wherever people struggle to understand land use code, they will resent the land use system and the small land use clergy (attorneys, planners, nonprofits like ours) who understand it.

I hope resources can be allocated to DLDC to help counties enforce codes and to make the body of land use laws easier to navigate and understand. The elephant in the room is this: many of our land use laws are not being enforced, and consequently, much of what we do at the state level is merely symbolic. I think the budget should ensure that the valuable work we do at the state level has tangible results.

Nico Salter, executive director,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nico Salter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thrive Hood River