

Submitter: Alexander Salazar

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB847

I support SB 847 - the expansion of the current exemption from prevailing wage requirements for affordable housing to apply to the affordable housing portion of mixed-use projects.

I am an Architect specialized in affordable housing and community development work. One of our recent designs is Las Adelitas, an affordable housing development on the edge of the Cully district in Portland, Oregon. Originally it was designed as a 5-story high density affordable housing development with ground floor community serving commercial space, including: a large commercial kitchen to support micro vendors / small businesses who would grow and create jobs; permanent space for commercial food carts in the public plaza supporting small businesses; and a new early learning center supporting working families. All of this would have had huge positive impacts in the area, which is a very diverse neighborhood that includes many immigrant Latino and African families. However, mid-way through the design we learned that the added costs of prevailing wages -- because we were above 4 stories, and because we had commercial spaces -- were too high. We had to remove a full floor of affordable housing apartments, and we had to remove all the community serving commercial space.

This example illustrates unintended negative impacts created by having a 'commercial' designation impacting affordable housing developments. SB 847 will help fix these issues, which is why I support it. Thank you.