

Submitter: Julia Nielsen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure: HB3482

Chair Dexter, Co-Vice Chair Gamba, Co-Vice Chair Helfrich, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to providing Oregonians with creative, humane, proven, cost-effective housing solutions in this housing crisis. My name is Rev. Julia Nielsen, and I am the director of the Leaven Community Land & Housing Coalition, a statewide collective of faith communities working together to use our land for affordable housing.

I am here today to strongly advocate for the full funding and passage of HB 3482 to provide resources for non-profits, faith communities, tribal communities, housing authorities, and local governments in the process of developing affordable housing on our properties.

In just Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas counties, we know that there are over 1800 buildable acres of faith land waiting right now to be unlocked to house our houseless neighbors. The amount of faith land ready for development across the state is immense, but we're in a bind because despite our willingness to develop on it, we find ourselves facing initial barriers only a partnership with the State can help us overcome.

Over the last 7 years, I have had countless conversations with Christian, Jewish, and Buddhist congregations who are dedicated to lending their land to the effort of housing. We know our land is valuable, and often located in exactly the places where affordable housing is most needed. Our faith communities are cash-poor but land and relationship-rich. However, over and over again, the question of 'Can we build housing on this plot of land?' is nearly impossible to answer because we cannot even get to the point of completing feasibility studies and getting through basic steps of pre-development due to the cost to do so. On their own, these costs can often total over \$100,000 and prevent projects from getting off the ground. Additionally, for the congregations that commit to building housing, we also run into strong 'Not In My Backyard' neighbor opposition that we spend months and years trying to counter. We also hear from our housing development partners that finding new and creative ways to shift neighbors from opposed to supportive of housing takes immense time and effort - but that it is worth it in the end!

HB 3482 provides resources in two crucial areas to remove these barriers — pre-development support and technical assistance. First, this bill will provide financial

support for pre-development costs, ranging from land surveys to community engagement efforts to build neighbor approval. Giving organizations access to pre-development dollars will help to ensure that projects are able to get started without costs being a barrier. Second, HB 3482 will provide a resource to assist with project management and community engagement to counter NIMBYism, using experienced local organizations.

From a personal standpoint, my own former church, Portsmouth Union in North Portland, is now just weeks away from opening 20 units of deeply affordable housing for veterans. It took us nearly 8 years to achieve this, and cost us not only time and money, but also cost those houseless veterans valuable years of supportive housing and services. If HB 3482 had been in effect when we began, our housing would have been built years ago. There are an additional 42 congregations I am aware of TODAY who would immediately apply for this grant program if this bill is passed.

Let us help solve the housing crisis. We have a moral obligation and the will to do so. We are ready, if you will help us over this hurdle. I hope you will join us and vote a strong yes on HB 3482.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration,

Rev. Julia Nielsen