

Submitter: William Gehr
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

I am a resident of Portland and member of Willamette Riverkeepers and the Lower Columbia Canoe Club. I am concerned about the lack of supply of affordable housing in Oregon and especially in Portland. I can understand the motivation to facilitate the residential housing permitting process in an effort to increase supply. However, the proposed HB 3414 goes too far. Section 2 needs to be deleted or substantially revised. Local codes all over the state have been painstakingly crafted to protect sensitive environments (wetlands, floodplains, trees, wildlife habitat), and to provide a measured evaluation of specific development proposals. Section 2 assumes that existing variance denials are ill-considered and decided without substantial evidence. Section 2 overrides these local codes with vague language that, if defined, would probably look similar to existing codes.

On another front, HB 3414's proposed creation of the Housing Accountability and Production Office could be a desirable action that might lessen expensive and unwieldy delays in the overall permitting process. Permitting guidance to permittees as well as to local planning staff may be warranted and does not imply that environmental protections will be lessened or compromised. Please consider these points in revising HB 3414.