

Submitter: Joseph Stenger

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Dear Chair Senator Jama, Vice-Chair Senator Anderson and members of the Committee,

I am writing with concern about SB 1537. My name is Joseph Stenger MD. I live in NE Portland and I am Co-Chair of the Transportation Committee for MCAT (Mobilizing Climate Action Together).

I applaud the Governor for proposing a sweeping bill to address the dire housing deficit that is causing Oregonians so much suffering. However, the solutions to the housing deficit must not exacerbate other problems facing us now.

As transportation accounts for the largest sector of greenhouse gas pollution in Oregon, reducing these emissions is a cornerstone of progress toward our state's climate goals. Building homes within current Urban Growth Boundaries means closer access to transit, makes active transportation more practical, and makes auto travel shorter, thus reducing GHG emissions. Building homes closer to city centers is far preferable for lower income families as they are then less car-reliant and spend less of their budget on travel, so such home building is more equitable. Building homes within UGBs prevents replacement of valuable undeveloped land, thereby retaining the biodiversity and carbon sequestration of forested and agricultural land.

Oregon's citizens are justifiably proud of our land-use heritage and the rich natural wonders that have been preserved thanks to that heritage. Allowing exceptions to the rules that define that heritage is to erode that tradition and to risk degradation of those natural wonders. At a time when our whole biosystem is under threat, we should not allow that to occur.

There is sufficient land within the UGBs to build the lower-cost homes we need. Expanding beyond the UGBs, with its attendant high system development costs, is a false solution, as it will primarily result in higher-cost homes whose occupants are dependent on cars. We need housing density within the current limits of our cities, close to work, shops and healthcare, and with less contribution to climate pollution.

Please vote for an amendment to eliminate alterations to present UGBs. Such an amendment will facilitate passage of a major bill to address the housing deficit, while preserving a key part of our heritage.

Sincerely,

Joseph Stenger MD  
Portland OR