

Submitter: Ryan Haynes

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and high spirits as you continue to serve the people of Oregon with dedication and foresight. I understand the weight of responsibility that rests on your shoulders. It is in this spirit of shared commitment to public service that I reach out to you today regarding an issue of paramount importance: housing affordability in Oregon.

The beauty of Oregon, with its vast forests, rugged coastlines, and vibrant communities, is undeniable. It is a state that many dream of calling home. Yet, for too many, that dream is slipping out of reach due to the escalating costs of housing. This crisis demands bold solutions and a willingness to reevaluate existing policies, including those that have shaped the very contours of our cities and towns: urban growth boundaries (UGBs).

Implemented with the best of intentions, UGBs in Oregon were designed to protect the natural beauty that defines the state, to prevent urban sprawl, and to encourage more efficient land use. These goals are commendable and reflect a deep commitment to the environment and the quality of life for all Oregonians. However, the unintended consequences of these boundaries on housing affordability cannot be overlooked.

As the demand for housing continues to vastly outpace supply within these restricted areas, prices have soared, leaving many families and individuals struggling to find affordable homes. The vision of a community where people of all income levels can afford to live, work, and thrive seems increasingly out of reach. This challenge compels us to act, to find a balance between preserving the natural and cultural heritage of Oregon and ensuring that its cities remain accessible and affordable for all who wish to call them home.

I urge you, as the stewards of this great state, to consider the elimination of urban growth boundaries as a means to increase housing affordability. By allowing for thoughtful, managed expansion, we can create opportunities for new housing developments that meet the needs of Oregon's growing population. This is not to suggest a wholesale abandonment of our environmental responsibilities or community values but rather an invitation to innovate, to imagine new ways of living in harmony with the land that sustain us.

Such a path forward requires courage, creativity, and collaboration. It calls for engaging with communities, developers, environmentalists, and housing advocates to craft policies that ensure growth is sustainable, equitable, and reflective of the values that Oregonians hold dear. It is an opportunity to lead, to show that it is possible to build a future that honors our past while making room for new stories, new families, and new dreams.

I have every confidence in your ability to rise to this challenge. Together, you have the power to enact meaningful change that will ensure the dream of affordable housing is within reach for every Oregonian. It is a goal worthy of our best efforts, and it is a task that I know you will approach with the wisdom, compassion, and foresight that has always characterized the great state of Oregon.

Thank you for considering my views on this critical issue. I look forward to seeing the positive impact your actions will have on the lives of countless individuals and families across the state.