

CITY OF NEWPORT

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February 9, 2024

The Honorable Kayse Jama, Chair  
Senate Committee on Housing and Development  
900 Court St. NE, S-409  
Salem, Oregon 97301

**RE: Adjustment Provisions of SB 1537**

Dear Chair Jama and members of the Committee,

The City of Newport would like to express its appreciation for the effort that has been made by the Governor's office to put together a comprehensive housing bill, with an eye toward accelerating statewide housing construction in the coming years. Unfortunately, we cannot support the adjustment provisions of the legislation, as drafted. If our City is to be compelled to grant adjustments to clear and objective land use and design standards that it has taken pains to craft in a manner that meets community objectives, then it is imperative that we realize additional housing, or more affordable housing. The adjustment provisions of the bill fall short in this regard, as the language fails to ensure that an applicant demonstrate the adjustment(s) they are seeking would actually create more housing units or make housing more affordable.

As a rural, tourist-oriented coastal community, Newport has long struggled with the challenges inherent to having a limited amount of available housing, and in particular affordable housing. The City has undertaken a number of tangible steps to promote housing construction, and those efforts are showing results. Over the last 10 years, the number of housing units built in Newport is more than 50% above what we are projected to need given our annual growth rate, and the average number of units over the last 5 years is 150% of our projected need. We are doing our part.

Unfortunately, the adjustment provisions of SB 1537 are more likely to complicate our efforts than help. We have worked closely with community partners to implement state guidance and model codes to support middle housing, and greater residential densities, and have seen positive results. With higher residential densities, it has become evident that requirements like lot coverage limitations and design standards are essential to promoting livable

communities that will thrive over the long run. We must be able to continue to utilize these tools, or risk losing community support for our efforts.

Most recently we completed multi-year comprehensive planning processes to produce a Housing Capacity Analysis and a Housing Production Strategy that were adopted by our City Council and approved by DLCD. The development of these plans involved considerable investment of our Community Development Department, community members, and stakeholders. We sincerely hope that Committee members take the time to review Newport's and other city's plans to understand our needs and strategies. Successful planning should recognize and build upon the efforts and successes already in place and should honor the efforts of our city governments, involved citizens and stakeholders.

We respectfully request that the adjustment provisions in SB 1537 be eliminated. If that is not possible, then we ask that you exempt jurisdictions where housing is being built at a pace that meets or exceeds their projected annual need. Alternatively, you might consider packaging the adjustment provisions as a set of tools that the new Housing Accountability and Production Office can use to help facilitate housing construction in circumstances where barriers are preventing it from happening.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jan Kaplan, Mayor  
City of Newport