

Submitter: Paul Diller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

Dear Sirs and Madams,

By way of professional background I teach Property and State and Local Government Law at Willamette University College of Law and have done so for 18 years. The views offered here are my own.

I believe that there is much good in Senate Bill 1537 (2024) as proposed. Efforts to reduce the cost of housing in Oregon are essential. I oppose the bill in its current form because it would jettison the normal processes for expanding the urban growth boundaries (UGB) of metropolitan areas as established by Oregon law. Oregon's land-use system, premised on 1973's Senate Bill 100, is legendary and well-known throughout the country and world. While it has flaws, the UGB system has succeeded at preserving farmland and keeping farmland close and accessible to urbanized areas. As a resident of Wilsonville, on the edge of the Portland-area Metro UGB, I see this first-hand. I buy peaches at orchards just south of town and pick berries near the edge of my city. Families who own or work on farms live in Wilsonville and/or attend its schools.

To allow housing to expand beyond the UGB without more state support for transportation and public transit in particular could be very damaging. In Wilsonville, developers are building hundreds of homes in Frog Pond, within the UGB but on the edge of Wilsonville. There is currently no bus service to any of the new homes. The bill as proposed would only lead to more of that kind of development. To add this kind of development while the state continues to kick the can down the road on expanding Willamette Valley commuter rail and implementing tolling would only make our already-intolerable traffic problems worse. I hear that the legislature will "get around to" transportation in 2025. It needs to tackle transportation and housing together.

I also am concerned that the bill would allow cities to expand their UGB's while lots of state-owned land in the middle of Salem sits largely unused because state executive branch workers largely work from home these days, post-COVID. Why not convert some under-utilized state office buildings into housing before busting UGBs? Why not develop a couple of the often-not-half full surface parking lots that service those state buildings? The state should put its money where its mouth is and lead the way on housing before allowing fertile farmland to be lost forever.

I am also somewhat concerned that the bill would create yet another layer of

bureaucracy through the Housing Accountability and Production Office (HAPO) on top of the already existing bureaucracy that administers Oregon's land use laws: the Department of Land Conservation and Development. Why not fold HAPO's anticipated responsibility into DLCD? A new office just adds to the state's already-high tax burden.

Thank you for your kind attention to my testimony.

Sincerely,
Paul A. Diller
Wilsonville, Ore.