



To: Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Breese-Iverson
Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

Re: Testimony in Support of HB 3031-1

Chair and Members,

My name is Ron Whitlatch, City Manager for the City of Lebanon. I am here today to voice our support for HB 3031 and the Governor's commitment to infrastructure funding for housing development.

The City of Lebanon is a rural community in east Linn County of just under 20,000 in population. We are not a large community, but we have been a proactive community in addressing Oregon's housing crisis. Over the past five years, we have produced over 1,000 new residential units, with hundreds more in the pipeline. Most notably, nearly 20% of all new construction has been dedicated to affordable housing, including developments for veterans, farm workers, and income-restricted households. Our city has also implemented a Housing Production Strategy, focused on increasing density bonuses, exploring land banking opportunities, and streamlining permitting processes to reduce delays and lower costs for housing development.

These efforts have led to real results. In 2019, over 35% of Lebanon's renter households were considered severely rent-burdened—spending more than half their income on housing. Through our commitment to housing production, that number steadily decreased, and in 2024, for the first time, Lebanon was no longer classified as a severely rent-burdened community. This is the largest reduction in the state's rent burden status to date.

To continue our support of housing production, we need the State's support on infrastructure. We strongly support the flexibility HB 3031 provides in facilitating site development and prioritizing affordable housing within cities. As the bill advances, it is critical to ensure that small cities have the capacity and support needed to effectively access and administer these funds. A program that recognizes the unique challenges faced by smaller communities will drive stronger participation and greater housing production.

Equally important is a comprehensive approach to infrastructure investment, with a strong focus on water and wastewater systems, which are fundamental to sustaining long-term housing growth and community well-being.

Lebanon is doing its part to produce the housing that Oregon needs, but we cannot do it alone or again on the backs of our residents, considering a household income in our community that's 35% lower than Oregon's average. State investment in infrastructure is essential to ensuring continued progress. We strongly support HB 3031-1 and look forward to working with the state to ensure this program is accessible and effective for communities of all sizes.

Thank you for your time, and I urge your support of this bill. I am happy to answer any questions.

Ron Whitlatch

City Manager