

Submitter: Jennifer Shuch

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

My name is Jennifer Shuch and I am on the Board of Portland: Neighbors Welcome, a grassroots pro-housing organization based in Portland. I am also an urban planning consultant, and I have worked with communities of all sizes across Washington on policies and best practices to support housing opportunities through middle housing.

Currently, I live in a duplex in NE Portland's Concordia neighborhood. When I was looking to purchase a home in 2017, I knew my strengths and weaknesses - I am not a do-it-yourself handiwoman, and I didn't have the time or energy to embark on fixes and upgrades to an older home. I was hoping to find a relatively new house or condo in North or Northeast Portland within my budget, and what I found was half of a relatively new duplex just a few blocks from the Alberta Arts District.

Previous legislation broadened where duplexes and other middle housing types were allowed statewide. HB 2138 will help make middle housing easier to build and expand homeownership opportunities to help a wide variety of people, including first-time homebuyers, multigenerational households, smaller families, and seniors looking to downsize.

Importantly, this bill will also discourage the practice of neighborhoods declaring themselves "historic" as a way of preventing new housing construction. No neighborhood is so precious that it should be exempt from welcoming new neighbors. By their nature, cities grow and change. People move in and people move out. This is the true history of our neighborhoods. At a time when so many of our country's leaders are clinging to an imagined past, let's be on the right side of history and choose to be more welcoming and less exclusive.