

Submitter: Shawn Irvine
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3031
Members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

I am writing to express the City of Independence's support for HB 3031.

Independence is a rural community of 10,000 located southwest of Salem. Our community has experienced significant housing development, almost doubling in population the last 20 years, but we have not escaped the housing affordability crisis that affects cities across our state. While growing quickly the City has worked hard to keep up with infrastructure upgrades necessary to support continued residential and business growth. Unfortunately, funding these large and increasingly expensive projects has forced us to raise our utility rates to the limits of affordability and significantly raise our System Development Charges.

Like many communities in Oregon, Independence has additional land available for development – and developers interested in constructing the type of mixed-density housing that will create more affordable options for residents. The limiting factor is the expensive infrastructure projects needed to properly serve the developable land – things like a new sewer lift station, a new bridge, and a new drinking water treatment plant. These are infrastructure projects that serve a large area and are significant expenses. If the expense is placed entirely on the developers, their financial pro-formas become untenable. If the City funds these projects, we will have to further burden our ratepayers and raise our SDCs to levels that will also make development untenable.

HB 3031 is an excellent step toward addressing our state's housing production and affordability issues because it proposes to fund the kind of infrastructure projects that would free up development in places like Independence. We would appreciate your support for this important bill.

Sincerely
Shawn Irvine
Assistant City Manager