

Submitter: Nikolai Ursin

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2138

I strongly urge your support House Bill 2138 to remove barriers to building much-needed housing across Oregon.

Oregon's housing shortage is exacerbated by outdated restrictions—especially in National Register Historic Districts, which allow a small group of landowners to block housing development and exclude working families. These districts freeze neighborhoods in time, preventing communities from evolving to meet modern housing needs. HB 2138 restores local control and ensures cities can balance historic preservation with the urgent need for homes.

I specifically urge the committee to retain the language in SECTION 22(1), which repeals the requirement for demolition review for homes listed as "contributing" in National Register Historic Districts. Unlike local historic districts, which have democratic oversight from city councils that can consider broader community needs, National Register districts are controlled by private landowners who are not accountable to the public. HB 2138 keeps cities' ability to preserve important historical resources while giving them the flexibility needed to build housing for Oregonians of all ages, wages, and life stages.

This bill also expands middle housing—duplexes, cottage clusters, and ADUs—so more people can live near jobs, schools, and transit. More housing means lower costs, reduced commutes, and stronger communities.

Without these reforms, Oregon will continue to face rising rents, displacement, and worsening inequality. HB 2138 is a critical step toward housing affordability and abundance. I urge you to pass it.

Sincerely,  
Nikolai Ursin