

Sydney Cyrus
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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Written Testimony in Opposition to Oregon Bill SB 78

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Oregon Senate Bill 78, which imposes restrictive limitations on the rebuilding of homes destroyed by fire, flooding, or decay on farm or forest land. While I recognize the importance of responsible land-use policies, this bill unfairly restricts property owners and does not effectively address any pressing issues within the existing replacement dwelling process.

SB 78 would limit the floor area of a rebuilt home to either 10 percent of its original size or a maximum of 2,500 square feet. This arbitrary limitation disproportionately impacts homeowners who have already suffered losses due to natural disasters or deterioration. Instead of helping Oregonians rebuild their lives, the bill imposes unnecessary hardships, potentially forcing families out of their properties and discouraging reinvestment in rural communities.

There are several key reasons why SB 78 is problematic:

1. **Unfair and Arbitrary Size Limits** – The proposed restrictions fail to consider the unique needs of homeowners and their families. Many properties currently exceed the 2,500-square-foot limitation, making it impossible for residents to rebuild a home that meets their needs.
2. **Disproportionate Impact on Rural Communities** – Farm and forest landowners often rely on their homes as both residences and operational hubs. Restricting rebuilding efforts undermines economic stability and discourages investment in these areas.
3. **Failure to Address Practical Concerns** – The bill does not solve any clear problems with the existing process for replacing dwellings. Instead, it creates more barriers for residents who are already facing the emotional and financial burdens of losing their homes.
4. **Potential Constitutional and Property Rights Issues** – Restricting the ability to rebuild may infringe upon property owners' rights, raising legal concerns about regulatory takings.
5. **Negative Impact on Farmland Value and Housing Availability** – By restricting the ability to rebuild homes, this bill would reduce the value of farmland, making it less attractive for both current and prospective owners. Additionally, given Oregon's already limited housing supply, imposing further restrictions on rebuilding will exacerbate the housing shortage and make it even more difficult for families to find adequate housing.

Rather than imposing rigid restrictions, the legislature should explore alternative solutions that balance responsible land use with the rights of property owners. Policies should support, not hinder, rebuilding efforts for those affected by disaster or decay. I urge you to reject SB 78 and consider more constructive approaches that allow Oregonians to rebuild their homes and communities in a fair and sustainable manner.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Sydney