

Stuart Emmons, FAIA testimony in support of HB 3135 March 10, 2025.

Chair Marsh, members of the committee, my name is Stuart Emmons with offices in Astoria and Portland and I am here in support of HB 3135. The last 17 years of my architectural career have focused on modular housing. I have worked with 5 modular companies on housing in Oregon, Washington, California and Pennsylvania. My roles have included modular housing product architect and strategic planner.

I just came back from LA where I toured and evaluated 4 modular housing companies, bringing my total to about 30 companies nationwide visited.

I'm a board member of the Modular Building Institute, an international organization focused on modular housing. Just last month, I was elevated by the American Institute of Architects to the College of Fellows (FAIA) with 2 other Oregonians for my work in modular housing nationally.

Modular Housing is hard, but if we want to make real progress on our housing crisis, it needs to be part of the solution. Modular delivers housing projects much faster, can take advantage of repetition, and can grow into an Oregon industry that creates housing construction jobs that are attractive to younger Oregonians who get turned on by innovation and making an impact.

Last year I talked to a principal of one of Oregon's leading affordable housing builders, and he said to me: 'Stuart, modular is the future.'

In 2013, thanks to some help from our State, we completed Kah San Chako Haws, a 12 unit modular affordable housing project that tested 3 unit types and stacking to 3 stories. The plan was to successfully build a smaller Phase 1 project, and then in Phase 2 build several modular housing projects to scale. At this industry incubation period, we still needed some government assistance to take this next step because:

1. Financial institutions need to see successful larger scale modular housing projects for comparables.
2. We need to take lessons learned from Phase 1 test projects and apply them to larger scale modular housing projects.

Well, that important Phase 2 didn't happen, and partly because of that, in the last decade Oregon's modular housing industry languished while other states like California and Idaho made much more progress. Oregon is a natural for this industry due to our resources and knowledge.

Right now, I am teamed with Blazer Industries on the State of Oregon Modular Housing Development Fund grant. It's been great to do Phase 1 R+D, but R+D needs to see Phase 2 housing projects to scale to really spur on the industry and help incentivize private sector modular projects.

Several potential modular housing projects in Oregon are stalled for reasons to do with gap financing and Oregon's early adopter modular industry. In these instances – some government investment can go a long way in making these projects a reality.

I want to see Oregon as a national leader in modular housing, and we can get there. I think HB 3135 is a path to that end, and essential to help grow Oregon's modular housing industry. Thank you.

