



April 16th, 2025

House Committee On Rules
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St, NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Oppose HB 3499

Chair Bowman and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Economic Development Association (OEDA) is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to the service and support of Oregon's economic development practitioners on the front lines of diversifying and expanding Oregon's economy. Our association represents members and stakeholders from more than 180 public and private entities from economic development corporations, cities, counties, ports, utilities, tribes, and many other organizations interested in attracting and retaining investment here in Oregon.

We understand the sentiments behind voter approval of urban renewal projects, but believe the risks of giving the electorate veto power of important urban renewal could have more downside than protection for taxpayers. Further, our organization was involved in extensive review and negotiation over updated reforms to urban renewal just five years ago, culminating in HB 2174 (2019) which allowed greater protection and oversight for taxing districts when creating or renewing urban renewal districts.

Our members believe that urban renewal is essential for local development. It is a key tool cities use to finance infrastructure that enables housing production and economic growth. By requiring a public vote for new urban renewal plans and substantial amendments, HB 3499 would discourage the use of this tool, slowing development across the state. Given the continual review and revision of our urban renewal program in Oregon, historical abuses of urban are no longer permitted under Oregon law. Cities must use the tool responsibly, with oversight from special districts and the public. Legal safeguards are in place to ensure accountability.

Unfortunately, at times the public's understanding of urban renewal and opponents share inaccurate claims about the process, such as taking money from schools or creating new taxes. With no checks on misinformation in ballot materials, public votes may be swayed by these inaccuracies, costing our local governments vital opportunities for new investment, growth in the tax rolls, and community enhancement. Further, the tool involves detailed public finance mechanisms that are difficult to explain even to policymakers. Expecting voters to fully grasp and vote on these technicalities is unrealistic and risks decisions being made without proper understanding. Still, we assure the committee that public engagement is already part of the process. From a governance standpoint, elections for new or amended urban renewal plans would increase administrative costs

and delay urgently needed projects, reducing predictability and deterring private investment. Cities already follow Oregon's Land Use Planning Goal 1, which ensures robust community involvement in planning. Once a plan is adopted, local governments need effective tools like urban renewal to carry out those community-driven visions

Please oppose HB 3499 as it could have a chilling effect on badly needed investment and revitalization across our state. It will have a disproportionate impact on smaller and under-resourced communities, which rely on urban renewal to attract investment, build infrastructure, and support revitalization.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Caitlyn Q". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Caitlyn Quwenikov
Executive Director, Oregon Economic Development Association (OEDA)