

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 2647

Thank you, Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson and Members for this opportunity to speak in support of HB 2647. I am Cecelia Koontz, serving my fourth term as the volunteer Mayor of Monmouth.

Our motto is Monmouth – Where Great Things Grow. We celebrate the Oregon bounty that lies just beyond our urban growth boundary, as well as the businesses, and people who work, live, and learn within it. We are proud to be the home of Western Oregon University, which brings so many benefits to our community. It also presents a unique challenge – WOU is the largest landowner inside the City, creating property tax revenue constraints, while also landlocking us from potential growth.

We have spent hundreds of hours in the last three years updating our housing needs analysis and housing production strategy. Out of that, the Monmouth City Council adopted a primary goal – to develop attainable housing and encourage home ownership as a way to build generational wealth. This work has been a huge lift for our volunteer Planning Commission, Council, and the 1.8 FTE we have in charge of Community, Economic Development, and Planning.

While the housing formulas show we have plenty of residential land inside our UGB, much of that is unbuildable, due to different forks of Ash Creek and handful of large properties, whose owners are staunchly against selling; which thwarts us from meeting the goals we have worked so hard on.

We want to provide opportunities for people of all ages and socio-economic status to live comfortably in a beautiful town like Monmouth and we work with multiple developers who have provided a variety of housing options on the limited land available.

What we don't have is the staff capacity, nor money, to go through the often expensive, onerous existing process to swap out precious, environmentally sensitive land that is inside our UGB, for land more suited to development, which currently lies outside it.

HB 2647 will allow the City of Monmouth to honor one of its three core values – Sustainability - while doing our part to meet state housing goals. It will actually shrink our UGB by 15 acres. Since passage of 2647 in the House chamber, we have added amendments, which do two things:

1. Make a slight correction to the percent of projected wetlands in the subject property and,
2. Address concerns expressed by state agencies DLCD and DSL. Namely, this legislation is only to expedite the land swap. There is no intent for Monmouth to shortcut the succeeding normal land use actions such as annexation and zone changes.

I thank you for your service to our state and I ask for your support of HB 2647.