

Submitter: Michelle Jenck

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On  
Capital Construction

Measure, Appointment or SB5531  
Topic:

Esteemed Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michelle Jenck. I serve as the Well-Being Director for Adventist Health Tillamook, Coordinator for Tillamook County Wellness and am also a Tillamook County Housing Commissioner. Our county's critical need for workforce housing intersects all of these roles. This bill's funding would allow the Tillamook Bay Commons, a critical workforce housing project, to move forward. As such, I am writing to request your support of SB5531.

For the third triennium, our Community Health Needs Assessment has shown lack of housing to be the largest driver of health outcomes in Tillamook County. (In 2019 we had a 1% vacancy rate.) We have made great strides in bringing more affordable housing into the county. Workforce housing remains very challenging given environmental, zoning and infrastructure limitations in our rural, coastal region. Additionally, our tourism-based economy has driven market rate housing prices/rents out of reach for working people. Lack of dedicated funding sources for workforce housing remains a significant barrier. Simply put, workforce housing does not pencil out. This is putting a strain on our local economies - particularly in recruiting teachers, healthcare employees and other vital workers to live and work in Tillamook County.

We are very fortunate to have a tenacious, dedicated developer in Maker Development Studios as a partner in this effort. They have gone above and beyond to create a demonstration case for workforce housing that can catalyze development once initiated. Through creation of a non-profit and pre-leasing of units by area businesses, including Adventist Health Tillamook, Maker has garnered nearly all funding needed to get this project to fruition. Due to the instability of federal and state funding opportunities, development of this critical project has been stymied. That said, Maker has secured critically needed bond financing. Funding from this bill is all that is needed to get the project moving again. We implore your support as many other doors have been closed after once being open over the past two years it has taken to get this vital demonstration project off the ground.

Tillamook County has been very innovative and forward-thinking in tackling our housing shortages. We are hopeful SB5531 will provide the necessary funding to help us launch our workforce housing strategy - one that can be self-sustaining into the future and serve as a model for our state. Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Sincerely,  
Michelle Jenck, M.Ed.  
Adventist Health Tillamook