



May 13, 2025

Rep. Pam Marsh and Committee Members
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
State Capitol
Salem, OR

Re: SB 974A

Dear Rep. Marsh and Committee Members:

We were both in the remote queue last week and yesterday to testify on SB 974A on behalf of our respective organizations. Yesterday's testimony reinforced our conclusion that the bill that goes forward should focus only on the timeline for completing engineering/public works reviews of applications for housing developments inside urban growth boundaries (UGB).

As originally introduced, SB 974 was focused only on establishing a permit "shot clock" for the portion of the housing application process that is often a significant bottleneck for moving housing projects forward quickly at the local level - the engineering approval process. Consensus emerged early on among diverse stakeholders that a timeline was needed for local engineering approvals for residential applications within UGBs. This was reinforced in Mr Wellner's testimony to the Committee on May 12.

LandWatch and 1000 Friends are supportive of the timeline provision for engineering/public works, as reflected in the A4 amendment to SB 974A, with any further mutually-agreed upon amendments to how that timeline would work that the League of Cities (LOC) and the bill's proponents bring forth. We understand that might also include a mandamus provision if the deadline is missed. We believe the possible award of fees should be only for attorney fees, not fees for engineering or other consultants, and it should be discretionary with the court. That seems reasonable.

We recommend not going forward with the other bill provisions for several reasons. The most fundamental is that there seems to be a significant difference of opinion between the bill proponents and LOC and individual cities as to the degree to which the design and variance provisions in SB 974 overlap and potentially conflict with the mandatory adjustments provision in

SB 1537. We are concerned this will result in confusion and inefficiencies at the city level, which will result in the opposite housing outcomes we are all seeking.

In addition, we believe that the types of land use decisions that would be made “limited land use decisions” are too broad, both in the A4 amendment and in what we heard today. These include decisions on comprehensive plans, comprehensive plan maps, planned unit developments, and at least some variances.

We urge the Committee to consider making this a clean shot clock bill for engineering approvals that is implementable by cities large and small, and to encourage the various interested parties to take time in the interim to determine if and how other objectives in the bill should be addressed.

Thank you.

Corie Harlan
Cities & Towns Program Director
Central Oregon LandWatch

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Associate Director
1000 Friends of Oregon