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May 14th, 2025

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Anderson, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the Professional and Technical Employees, Local 17 (PROTEC17), I write today with serious concerns regarding SB 974A. PROTEC17 represents approximately 10,000 public sector employees across the Pacific Northwest, including over 1,000 engineers, planners, information technology specialists, and development service technicians employed by the City of Portland.

We are the people who work on building permits at the City of Portland. We know the details of permitting housing and this bill raises red flags. We are concerned that this bill will lead to lower quality housing and that rapidly changing our systems will leave them less efficient.

Mandating a short timeline for permitting housing has many impacts. A short review timeline means applicants will likely face more detailed submittal requirements, shifting the burden to the customer. Pre-application meetings may be a solution, but are limited by time and resources. Additionally, a short timeline will likely increase errors, given the current complexity of building codes. In order to avoid errors and increase speed of review, building design could become increasingly standardized. Standardization hurts building stock by limiting choice and risks proliferating design flaws we discover in the future. Further, a short review timeline also means there is no opportunity for the community to provide comment on development which breaks the connection between buildings and place.

The City of Portland processes permits for thousands of housing units each year. Changing our systems to meet these new requirements needs time, and if rushed we end up with a system that is not more efficient. The City of Portland still relies on manual processing for much of permitting. Automating permitting is necessary, but without ample time to craft new systems it will remain a disjointed jumble of processes and tools. Meanwhile, the Portland permitting bureau will be laying off staff, reducing the people available to make all of this work.

Once built we know housing will remain for decades or even a hundreds of years. The decisions we make now will have long lasting impacts.

Thank you for your consideration, and we respectfully ask that you join PROTEC17 members in opposing or revising SB 974A.

Sincerely,

Elliot Levin
Research Director and Oregon Legislative Advocate