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Dear Chair Meek, Vice-Chair McLane, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the Astoria Housing Alliance, an advocacy nonprofit dedicated to ensuring every Astorian has access to safe and affordable housing. We would like to express our support for SB 1095 with a few recommended changes.

Astoria is known for its captivating blend of natural beauty and historical charm. Visitors from across the world come here to see the sights, experience the history, taste delicious creations from our breweries and restaurants, and, yes, do the “truffle shuffle” in front of the “Goonies House”.

However, behind the facade of beautifully restored historic homes climbing the slopes of Astoria’s hills lies a disturbing reality: many residents struggle to afford their housing, and yet a sizable portion of the homes here remain vacant for most of the year. It’s no secret that many houses in Astoria are only occupied for a few days per year. In fact, a recent study revealed that 15% of Astoria’s homes are classified as vacant or used for seasonal purposes¹.

We appreciate how this bill provides cities like Astoria with additional tools and greater certainty to withstand legal challenges should it choose to adopt a fee to help mitigate the consequences of a high concentration of empty homes. However, we’d like to suggest a few changes that would give cities like Astoria greater flexibility in addressing the specific conditions that impact the housing supply in popular recreation destinations like ours:

- As many of the vacant properties in Astoria are only occupied for a weekend or two per year, the changes introduced by the -A3 amendment in Section 1.D. (3), which classifies those properties as not

¹ <https://www.clatsopcounty.gov/county/page/housing-studies-and-reports>



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vacant, is surprising. **We suggest going back to the previous language of 180 days**, as it is more consistent with our on-the-ground experience regarding the empty homes that proliferate our neighborhoods.

- The bill limits the revenue uses to housing-related capital construction costs and administrative overhead. These uses are appropriate. However, we believe it would be helpful to **expand the allowed uses to include rental assistance programs** that will help Astoria's full-time residents find adequate housing. Many communities, including ours, are exploring Lease-To-Local programs as a practical tool to incentivise property owners with unoccupied housing to rent to the local workforce in need of housing. Permitting vacancy tax funding for this purpose is a common-sense approach to ensure the full-time residents and workers who staff our schools, hospitals, and businesses can find suitable housing.
- The tourist-focused nature of our economy means that much of Astoria's workforce, who are most in need of additional housing options, earn less than 80% of AMI. To ensure we have the flexibility to meet the housing needs of these Astorians, permitting revenue from a vacancy tax to be used for housing-related capital construction at **60% of AMI** would ensure it can be used where it is most needed.

We are deeply appreciative of the work the committee and legislature are doing to give cities more tools to address the housing shortage. We respectfully ask that you ensure these tools do not limit the options for cities like Astoria to implement practical solutions addressing our housing shortage.

Respectfully,
Andrew Kipp
President, Astoria Housing Alliance



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