

Submitter: Ramsay Weit
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1566
Chair Taylor and Vice-Chair Hayden,

I write in enthusiastic support of SB 1566.

As a former ED of an affordable housing loan fund, I spent years financing the construction of innovative and necessary housing. Frequently, the non-profit community development corporations sponsoring these projects sought to include child care or other vital services on the ground floor of their buildings. Often, they would target the major rehabilitation of an existing structure, with the goal of creating affordable homes.

Far too often, these projects would be stymied at the design stages by rulings from BOLI that prevailing wage rates would apply to the non-housing additions or that a rehab was deemed prevailing. The added labor costs were a real deterrent to these initiatives due to the obviously higher development expense. Efforts to change these restrictive interpretations go back to the Avakian days (or maybe before) without progress.

We all understand the argument for supporting the benefits to the construction workforce provided by the prevailing wage policies generally, but there should be a balancing here of the need to provide affordable housing to the many employed in retail, tourism, and other low-wage jobs who need housing with related services such as clinics or child care.

The proposed exemptions in the Bill are a much needed policy change, while protecting the foundational elements of the prevailing wage standards. We should be able to accommodate both policy goals at once..

Good Bill, should pass.

Thank you for your work.

Ramsay Weit
3617 SW Texas Street
Portland, OR 97219