

Submitter: Brian Squillace

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1566

As the Principal leading Bora's affordable housing design work I can speak with deep firsthand knowledge of the direct impacts we have seen from prevailing wage decisions. The majority of our work is in Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas County but we have also worked to develop affordable housing both on the Oregon Coast and in the southern Willamette Valley. This is a topic I have spoken widely about with developers, general contractors and other designers. There are two main challenges we face:

1. We are actively working on several sites which per zoning were allowed to go taller than 4 stories. Due to increased wage rates over that height; however, developers have had to limit the building height. Within the affordable housing developments we currently under design, this would amount to roughly 400 additional affordable units which could be under construction. I can only imagine the number of affordable homes we have missed out on as a state due to these restrictions. It is important to remember that affordable homes benefit everyone, putting downward pressure on the entire housing market. These benefits should be considered in wage rate discussions as those who benefit from higher wages also benefit, directly or indirectly, from the affordable homes and improved housing market.

2. A related exclusion for specific, small commercial uses, such as below-market rate commercial spaces or childcare centers would also be greatly beneficial. This is a common request by community members during community meetings and is a deep need for those living in affordable housing. Exempting prevailing wage, or at least prevailing only the commercial square footage and not the residential square footage, would dramatically help to reduce childcare deserts and improve access for residents of these developments.

It is with my deep concern as a citizen, and supported by my expertise in community design and development, that I sincerely request you to support this measure.