

Coastal Housing Center 768

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February 13, 2026

House Committee on Revenue
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for HB 4136

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Werner, Reschke and Walters, and Members of the Committee:

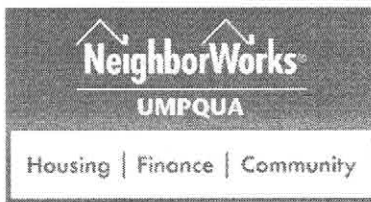
My name is Erica Mills, and I serve as CEO of NeighborWorks Umpqua, a rural community development organization serving southwestern Oregon. We provide housing counseling, homeownership services, affordable housing development, and home repair and climate resilience programs across several rural counties. I am writing in support of House Bill 4136.

At its core, HB 4136 strengthens primary homeownership in Oregon. Homeownership remains one of the most reliable pathways for working families to build equity, establish financial stability, and create opportunity for the next generation. In rural communities, where wages are often lower and economic mobility can be limited, access to ownership is closely tied to long term economic resilience.

The biggest barrier we see for first time buyers is not monthly affordability. It is upfront cash. Many households can responsibly manage a mortgage payment that is comparable to their rent, but they cannot accumulate enough savings for a down payment and closing costs while covering everyday expenses. As housing prices have risen, required down payments have risen with them, while wages in many rural communities have not kept pace. Historically, state supported down payment assistance helped bridge that gap, but in recent years those resources have been limited and, in many cases, unavailable because funding tied to document recording fees has declined. The result is that many otherwise qualified rural buyers simply do not have practical tools to compete in today's market.

This is not simply a housing issue. It is a workforce and economic development issue.

When teachers, nurses, tradespeople, public safety professionals, and small business employees cannot afford to buy homes in the communities where they work,

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employers struggle to recruit and retain talent. Workers face long commutes or relocate altogether. Local businesses lose customers. Dollars that could be spent at hardware stores, local contractors, childcare providers, and small retailers instead leave the community. Owner occupied housing keeps working families rooted and keeps money circulating locally.

HB 4136 takes a balanced and practical approach by limiting certain tax benefits related to second homes while reinvesting those resources into primary homeownership opportunities through the Oregon Homeownership Opportunity Account.

This policy better aligns state tax incentives with Oregon's workforce and economic priorities.

Even modest down payment assistance can make the difference between renting indefinitely and owning a home. Supporting primary homeownership strengthens rural workforce stability, reinforces local economic vitality, and helps ensure that the people who power our small towns can afford to live in them.

Thank you for your consideration. I respectfully urge your support of HB 4136.

Sincerely,

Erica Mills
Chief Executive Officer
NeighborWorks Umpqua
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