November 9, 2020

Robin McArthur, Chair, and Katie Pearmine, Vice-Chair
Land Conservation and Development Commission
esther.johnson@state.or.us

Re: Item 6–Support for Regional Housing Needs Analysis, Process and Policy Concerns

Dear Chair McArthur, Vice-Chair Pearmine, and Members of the Commission,

On behalf of the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA), we are writing to express our support for the concept of a Regional Housing Needs Analysis (RHNA) and housing equity distribution system as presented in the "Implementing a Regional Housing Needs Analysis Methodology in Oregon: Approach, Results, and Initial Recommendations" report.

OAPA is an independent, statewide, not-for-profit membership organization of more than 950 planners from across the state who work for cities, counties, special districts, state agencies, tribes, community-based organizations, and private firms. OAPA provides leadership in the development of vital communities by advocating excellence in community planning, promoting education and resident empowerment, and providing the tools and support necessary to meet the challenges of growth and change. OAPA supports sustainable communities, working to enhance the quality of life for current and future generations by helping to create and stabilize places that are equitable, healthy, and resilient, and to provide ongoing economic, environmental, and social benefits.

As an organization, we have been asking questions and challenging established norms within our profession to address systemic, institutional, and individual actions of racism and the legacy of white supremacy. We therefore fully support the following statement that is highlighted in the report, “The current system, therefore, reinforces existing residential segregation patterns by failing to affirmatively further fair housing access.”

We also support the following items that were highlighted in the study:

1. A state and regional outlook on housing that better matches market realities.
2. A system that maintains a consistent methodology and data collection methods, with the possibility to alleviate the cost and time to conduct city-level Housing Needs Analysis reports.
3. The incorporation of planning for housing needs to address homelessness and historic underproduction.
4. Targets for equitable distribution that strive to obtain greater economic and racial integration in our cities and address regional affordability.
5. Critiques that projection by housing type in the RHNA is flawed and does not address equity or affordability goals well.
6. Intention provided by DLCD and OHCS staff to provide a framework of how an RHNA system would be incorporated into existing efforts.

7. Recognition by the report authors that additional attention needs to be given to the implementation.

To achieve the reality of housing affordability for the proposed equity targets in this report, we would like to highlight a few process concerns and policy questions that must be addressed as the legislature moves forward with this important work. We look forward to working with the Commission, OHCS and DLCD staff, and the Legislature on the following:

- **The cost and feasibility of implementation.** It would be beneficial to better understand implementation costs (e.g. updating comprehensive plans, rezoning land for additional housing, planning for and building needed infrastructure) of at least some of the implementation tools. In addition, there are regulatory barriers set at the regional and state levels that must also be reviewed as they may provide impediments to additional housing alternatives. Specifically, the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR), mobility standards, employment land regulations, and environmental mitigation measures may adversely affect these alternatives. We must also be aware that there is a strong correlation between achieving the equitable housing targets proposed in this document and work in climate change, transportation, education, and health. As planners, we are committed to consideration of these multiple concerns and achieving the twin objectives of fair housing and climate-resilient communities.

- **Regulatory guidance and coordination.** The report proposes a system that would be enforced as would the Housing Production Strategies, but will this work? In California, targets for affordable housing were consistently not met, which led to recent laws overhauling the RHNA system that included state preemption of the local permitting process for affordable housing construction. This level of preemption of local land use control is not desired in Oregon, and stands in direct conflict to many aspects of our statewide planning system rooted in community engagement and local decision-making. Nevertheless, we concede that if we don’t get this right, preemption could follow. As planners, we are committed to getting the system done right the first time, in a way that supports and preserves local decision-making.

- **Tweaks or alternative proposals to the methodology.** To avoid a complex methodology that didn’t produce desired results, a compelling critique of the California system was to set a flat rate percentage of affordable housing required in each city. We suggest a comparable analysis run for a flat rate in Oregon for comparison to the RHNA recommended distribution. Although it is a laudable goal, some critics suggest the current methodology may provide too much weight on the location of housing near jobs, and not enough on allocation based on underproduction. For example, Lake Oswego’s percentage of underproduction (29%) is similar to cities like Oregon City (24%), which have a historic and current higher amount of subsidized housing. It would be a good idea to undertake this study, if possible, before final action on the RHNA.
We thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to working with you all to make Oregon a more equitable, affordable, and safe place to live.

Sincerely,

Aaron Ray, AICP, President
Board of Directors

Eunice Kim, AICP, Chair
Legislative and Policy Affairs Committee