

Committee Sign In - Remote Written Testimony Registration

Thank you for submitting your written comments on SB 6069 Supportive & emerg. housing. Your comments will be made available to legislative committee members and staff of the committee, and will be included in the legislative record for bill and meeting archival purposes, but will not be used as part of testimony summary materials on the bill report.

The text of your submission is below:

Please vote against this bill and allow the people of Washington to retain a democratic, accessible voice in the future zoning of their homes. Like t-shirts, local planning is not a one-size-fits-all situation, yet this bill opens by actively saying that's expressly your goal here.

1. This bill removes people's ability to participate democratically in their neighborhood. Remember, this bill is about all transitional housing—not just for emergency shelter and homeless but also for individuals who are being released from prison or who are battling addictions and mental illness. We've already had this happen in Sumner where two State employees bought a house in the middle of the residential neighborhood as a financial investment. They filled it with recently released men with no services or on-site presence. The neighbors had huge concerns about these men spending their days outside the house, smoking, lifting weights and staring at their homes and children for extended periods of time. Even under the current laws, cities like Sumner just had to tell the neighbors that our hands were tied. This bill only makes it worse. I get the issue of NIMBY. But, this bill goes too far in removing the opportunity for residents to weigh in on decisions that affect their homes and their neighborhoods. For too long, too many populations have been silenced by government about speaking up with concerns and being involved in their communities. This bill further silences their voices and leaves little opportunity, especially for low-income individuals, to travel to Olympia to testify about land use decisions made for their local neighborhoods across Washington.

2. This bill needs some more restrictions for cities to respond when issues do arise. This bill specifies transitional housing has to go in all neighborhoods with no restrictions about proximity to schools, day cares, churches or food banks. Yet, a bill you're also considering this session, regarding police surveillance cameras restricts cameras being those same facilities. Parents have huge safety concerns about convicted criminals living within the proximity of their children with absolutely no restrictions, notice or supervision. And, guess what: they all have cameras too. Not all transitional housing providers are the same. Some do great work and take great care to serve their residents and the people around them. But with this bill, you don't give neighbors or local government the flexibility to address specific concerns when they do arise, as they will in any kind of housing situation. By ordering us to have hands off all such housing, your bill unfortunately demonizes all STEP housing, the opposite of your intent, I believe.

3. This bill is far too lenient in building practices for the safety of the residents in STEP housing. Even though I have concerns for local land use and control, I also have concerns for the people who

will live in the STEP housing created by your bill. This bill unfortunately cuts corners for safety infrastructure, directly endangering everyone who will live in these facilities. This bill specifies that cities can't require commercial-level exits, fire sprinklers and other safety infrastructure as we would in an apartment, hotel or other multi-family building. This bill wants us to treat STEP housing the same as a single-family residence, and it's just not the same level of risk. Strangers are put together while they're battling various demons. With this clause, you are endangering the lives of all future residents in these housing facilities. I don't agree with cutting corners or ordering us as cities to look away from unsafe structures just because of whom is living there. With STEP housing, the government should be requiring that providers take extra care for the personal safety of all residents, not less.