Andrea Smiley

Yeah, good evening and thank you for the opportunity to comment tonight. I''m here on behalf of the Building Industry Association of Washington. I''m Andrea Smiley. I''m their legislative Director and we are a trade association representing residential construction. We have about 8300 members and about 145,000 employees. These are the people that build and maintain the places that we all call home. And our members support protecting shorelines and critical areas, especially planning for sea level rise and climate change going forward. But it''s one of the many environmental factors that make our state so beautiful. And our concern is that these proposals go much further than necessary and could significantly hinder housing affordability and supply production.

So while we''ll be submitting detailed written comments identifying every specific provision that we believe goes too far and would potentially make housing more expensive, we do believe that it''s not necessarily the intent to do this, but that we believe that, you know, the housing and the balance between our environmental needs need to be balanced a little bit better.

I will say our biggest concern is the potential loss of buildable land within the UGAs. This is where our state has told us that we want our communities to be able to, you know, accommodate future growth. And every time a buffer expands or additional land is removed from development or maybe there are competing buffers that make a variance or some sort of project differentiation possible but makes it super expensive, every time those situations happen, housing capacity shrinks. And again, that may not be obvious by obvious parcel by parcel and may not be the intent here, but the cumulative effect is there and it still adds up.

We''re also very concerned that many regulated areas appear to largely preclude middle housing. That''s been very, very top of mind for our state legislature in current years, both middle housing AD us. I''ll extend that also to lot splits and other housing diversity type of legislation to really increase supply and improve affordability could be threatened by the these changes. And so from our perspective the balance is really missing from this discussion.

As I alluded to earlier, Washington is asking our cities and counties to build for more housing. And while these rules are very well intended and protect, you know, the things that make Washington beautiful and amazing and why we live here, it could also make it much harder to build and make housing more expensive. So we believe we can provide the protection that the environment deserves and also do that while, you know, building the housing that is affordable and attainable to the people that live in our communities. But if we''re serious about our housing costs, we do need to acknowledge the trade-offs honestly. And taking more land off the table, limiting housing options and adding new regulatory barriers will only make it that more difficult and it''ll make homes more expensive to deliver.

Lastly, I want to just end my comment with the fact that I was at the Washington housing conference this week and Rep Hill mentioned this morning actually, that she wanted to see more Riverside condos in Spokane. Unfortunately, the proposed rules would make that impossible or extremely cross cost prohibitive and probably not even make those projects pencil.

We look forward to providing detailed comments and encourage careful consideration of the cumulative housing impacts before the rules move forward.