

I want to begin with a quote from someone speaking for the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund: “Manufactured housing communities represent the largest source of unsubsidized affordable housing in the country. Unfortunately, it has been somewhat invisible until it actually started disappearing.” *Cheryl Sessions, The New Hampshire Community Loan Fund*

There are nearly 800 of manufactured homes in my north Eugene district, and anywhere from several hundred to several thousand in districts around the state. Manufactured home parks have been closing; homeowners are being evicted. The problem is not theoretical, it's here.

When Oregon first started legislating to help mobile home part tenants – and remember, they are tenants of the property, but they own their own home – most mobile homes were just that, they were mobile. In the intervening decades, the mobile homes aged, the structures weakened. Building codes changed, and the manufactured home industry grew. These affordable homes are now built in a factory and moved to a site. Many of the older and newer Mobile or manufactured homes are really not even movable.

Is a nonprofit cooperative a good idea? I'm certain it is. It's not uncommon for two or more individuals to share resources and jointly purchase property for investment. This is an even more valuable use of the concept of shared ownership – the value of owning one's own home, and joining with others to own the land on which their homes are located.

Two business points that may interest you, one legal and one financial: Because this bill sets up a condition of non-profit association, if the association should ever decide to sell

the park, it will stay in non-profit status, and the money stays in nonprofit use, with the intent of preserving affordable housing.

And secondly, financing mobile homes and these park purchases is very difficult because the homes are considered personal property, and subject to interest rates of 12-13%. With the homes being attached to the property through the jointly owned cooperative, then the homes can truly be treated as Homes, and eligible for more realistic real estate loan rates just like mortgages on other homes, at about 5-6%. Let's help these park residents be treated as the homeowners they really are.

We say we value home ownership; we should be prepared not only to encourage home ownership, but to step in and help people keep the homes they already own, and keep in the neighborhoods in which they live. Moving is often NOT a viable option – either financially, or logistically. The home may not be movable, and even if it were, there may be no place to move it to. And, if there were, then all of the investments in street lighting, landscaping, and building up years of friendships and mutual neighborhood support are lost.

This housing is important for seniors and families. National sources show that the average household size is 2.3 people, and slightly more than half are employed full time.

Preserving affordable housing is far less expensive than developing new affordable housing. I can't think of a better way to ensure that people can work together to keep their home, and to help each other. I'm supporting this bill to take a modest step in helping to preserve people's affordable housing, and their neighborhood.