

Senate Local Government & Housing

03/27/2025 01:30 PM

HB25-1169 Housing Developments on Faith and Educational Land

Typed Text of Testimony Submitted

Name, Position, Representing	Typed Text of Testimony
Bryce Moore For themselves	<p>I'm writing to express my support for HB25-1169 (Housing Developments on Faith and Educational Land). For people across our region (and our nation at large) housing costs have come to constitute an enormous financial burden, and an increasingly worrying share of household incomes. This is impacting the financial security of everyday people, putting a damper on economic activity and entrepreneurship, and making it difficult for regular people to build wealth. This is a systemic problem that will continue to have disastrous effects for the larger US economy.</p> <p>The root of this growing problem is insufficient housing supply in general, and lack of affordable medium-to-high density housing in particular. Too often, onerous and lengthy re-zoning and local review processes have hamstrung efforts to increase housing supply, especially for higher density developments. I'm enthusiastically in favor of state-level efforts to simplify these processes and clear roadblocks for people who want to increase the housing supply.</p> <p>Opponents of new developments, and bills like this one, will often tout the importance of local control in permitting and zoning decisions. They do so without acknowledging the irony that these onerous, slow bureaucratic local processes often limit freedoms at the most local level possible - that of the individuals and institutions who own the land. Municipalities have had their chance to clear the roadblocks to affordable, abundant housing and have largely failed. It is time for the state government to help empower those who want to increase the housing supply, and HB25-1169 is an important first step.</p>
Tim Pegg For themselves	<p>I am writing to support HB25-1169 because it will help alleviate this state's housing crisis. Artificial local restrictions on housing development result in high rents, long commutes, deterioration of public transit, and displacement of low-income families from their neighborhoods. I support this bill because it overrides overzealous local regulation and will help alleviate the high economic burden of rising rents. I am asking you to vote YES on this bill in committee.</p>



8101 Ralston Road, Arvada, CO 80002

March 27, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Local Government & Housing Committee:

On behalf of the City of Arvada, I submit this testimony in opposition to **HB25-1169: Housing Developments on Faith and Educational Land**. While we recognize the need for housing and the pressing demand for affordable living options in our community, we strongly believe that repurposing land that has been set aside for faith and educational institutions is not an appropriate solution nor is it in the best interest of the long-term growth, stability, and character of Arvada.

The City of Arvada has long taken a proactive and thoughtful approach to zoning, ensuring that development aligns with the needs and priorities of our community. This bill, by limiting our authority to regulate zoning, would significantly hinder our capacity to make decisions that best serve the unique needs of Arvada's residents.

Here are some of our primary concerns that we'd like to highlight:

- **Undermines Local Control:** HB25-1169 would restrict Arvada's ability to regulate zoning, a responsibility that should remain at the local level. If this bill were to pass, it would greatly reduce our ability to manage land use in a way that aligns with our community's specific needs and priorities.
- **Disregards Long-Term Community Planning:** this bill fails to acknowledge years of thoughtful, long-range planning that our team has done and continues to do. The City's Housing Advisory Committee and City Council adopted our Housing Strategic Plan in 2024, which took over a year of analysis and consultation with the community to complete, and this legislation negates the value of intentional time and resources invested in building a plan that meets the needs of the Arvada community. Further, this bill does not address the affordability needs in Arvada, and will not ensure that folks with the greatest economic disparities will have any opportunity to access affordable housing.
- **Lack of Safeguards for Effective Implementation:** without clear definitions and protections against potential abuse, this bill opens the door to exploitation of zoning decisions, potentially leading to more confusion, inefficiencies, and unintended consequences in land use management.

We maintain a strong commitment to fostering balanced growth, preserving open spaces, and enhancing community services that could be severely undermined by the overreach presented in **HB25-1169**. Therefore, we strongly encourage the committee to consider the significant implications of this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Candice Svoboda

Assistant to the City Manager

Dear Senators,

I am writing in regards to HB 25-1169, the Yes in God's Back Yard bill. I am resident of Teller County, Colorado, and have been a member of the Teller County Planning Commission since 1992. I have several concerns that I hope you will consider.

The bill, as I understand it, requires that certain types of development on church or school property be subject only to administrative review. Teller county has a very small planning department. We do not have the resources or expertise to adequately review and plan for development of this bill's anticipated density as an administrative process. The planning department relies heavily on the expertise of planning commission members and citizen subject matter experts who comment on development projects in our county. Without review by the planning commission, and the subsequent public hearings, staff would be unable to adequately assess and address the issues raised by new residential development. Appropriate impact fees could not be established by staff, and the new housing would cause an undue burden on community services. I suggest that the bill be amended to apply to jurisdictions of greater than 50,000 residents, as these jurisdictions have larger planning staffs and are better able to conduct appropriate administrative reviews.

Although development is limited to 5 acres in size, it appears that this limit is 5 acres at a time, and that additional 5 acre parcels could be developed in sequence. In our county, one bible college owns over 1,000 acres. The residential density that could be approved over time would be a significant increase over our current population of 25,000. Our fire departments are volunteer departments, operating as Special Districts. Our ambulance services also operate as Special Districts. Their funding is from property taxes. Since churches and non-profits don't pay property taxes, these departments could see a huge increase in residences in their jurisdictions without any funding to allow the departments to grow. Without a planning department able to determine impact fees, these departments would be at a great disadvantage. I would propose an amendment that would limit development to lots that can be serviced by municipal fire departments and ambulance services.

Finally, the current bill is intended to supply affordable housing, yet it has no restrictions against short term rentals, and no requirement that the housing built be affordable. Most of our available housing in Teller County is being used as short term rentals. County employees, teachers, firefighters, healthcare workers, and casino and service industry workers cannot afford to live here. An amendment to require that these houses not be used as short term rentals is essential in a tourist driven environment like Teller County. These housing units should be affordable for workers in the area, not built for a market based on average home sales. As it is written, this bill is a gift to the housing industry, but does not address the housing needs of small rural counties like Teller County.



March 27, 2025

RE: HB25-1169 Housing Developments on Faith and Educational Land—SUPPORT

Dear Members of the Local Government & Housing Committee:

My name is Kathy Smith, and I am a Volunteer Lobbyist with the League of Women Voters of Colorado's Legislative Action Committee. **I am writing in support of HB25-1169 on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Colorado.**

The League of Women Voters of Colorado (LWVCO) has been a nonpartisan organization for 105 years, encourages informed and active participation in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Our membership spans the state of Colorado with 18 local leagues operating in several regions around our state. The LWVCO supports policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for everyone and continued evaluation to provide a basis for revision and strengthening of all procedures so that equality of opportunity for access to housing can be accomplished.

This bill empowers faith-based organizations and educational institutions to create housing by utilizing their existing land and their strong ties to community needs. With available land for housing becoming increasingly scarce in established communities, these institutions often own significant amounts of underutilized property that could be repurposed for housing. The bill requires a local administrative review process, allowing local jurisdictions to enforce infrastructure standards, building codes, impact fees, and other requirements, including affordability requirements. By reducing barriers and streamlining the review process, while making use of centrally located, underutilized land, Colorado can ensure that housing is developed in areas that are well-served by resources, reduce unnecessary commutes, limit sprawl, and provide easy access to community amenities. Additionally, this approach helps lower infrastructure costs for taxpayers and local governments.

We urge the committee members to vote YES on HB25-1169 to provide another tool to address our housing crisis. Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Respectfully,
Kathy Smith, Volunteer Lobbyist, Housing
League of Women Voters of Colorado
110 16th Street Mall, Suite 1326
Denver, CO 80202
303-863-0437

To summarize, my proposed amendments are:

1. Limit the scope of the bill to jurisdictions having a population greater than 50,000.
2. Limit properties to those serviced by municipal fire and ambulance departments.
3. Require that approved housing be affordable based on worker salaries in the area and not allowed to be used as short term rentals.

I hope you will consider my comments.

Sincerely,

Wendy Dillenschneider

9915 County Road 1, Florissant, Colorado 80816, (719) 339-1155

Good afternoon Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Dominguez, and I work with churches across Colorado that are exploring how to use their land to serve their communities—especially through affordable housing. Every week, I receive 1–2 calls from faith communities asking how they might repurpose underutilized land to meet urgent local needs. These churches are not looking to profit; they’re looking to love their neighbors.

The data tells us we are in a unique moment in history. By 2030, one-third of all churches will close or be sold off (*source: The Great Dechurching, Jim Davis and Michael Graham; also referenced by Mark Elsdon in Gone for Good*). We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reimagine this land for the common good.

I understand firsthand how hard it is to meet the needs of all stakeholders—cities, neighbors, congregations, and potential residents. While I had hoped this bill would go even further in ensuring deeper affordability, I also understand the reality: these deals are incredibly hard to pencil out, even when the land is being donated.

As we consider affordability measures I would ask that we work to incentivize affordability so that churches and their partners are rewarded, not penalized, for reaching deeper levels of affordability. We can continue to work toward those goals without losing the opportunity in front of us.

If this bill doesn’t pass, I worry we won’t get another chance. Many congregations simply don’t have the capacity to endure more years of delay. They are ready now. They want to serve. Let’s not make it harder for them to say yes.

Please support HB25-1169.

Jessica Dominguez
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Director of Faith Based Housing Initiatives
Abundant Ground/Mile High Ministries