March 8, 2022

The Honorable Jim L. Patrick, Chair and Mary Souza, Vice Chair
Commerce and Human Resources
Idaho State Legislature
700 W Jefferson St, Room WW54
Boise, ID 83702

RE: Letter of Support for HB 701 Idaho Workforce Housing Fund

Dear Senator Patrick, Senator Souza, and Commerce and Human Resources Committee Members:

The Idaho Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Idaho) represents more than 260 local planning officials, private-sector planners, and planning commission members statewide. We are the technicians, professionals, and policy and decision makers who represent the public interest in carrying out the authority vested with local government under Idaho’s Local Land Use Planning Act, Title 67, Chapter 65 of the Idaho Statutes. As President of the organization, I am writing to you on behalf of our members and the communities we serve and asking that you support House Bill 701, the Idaho Workforce Housing Fund (HB 701).

Idaho is being impacted more than most states with growth pressures and escalating home prices. In addition to in-migration, housing prices have been directly affected by the pandemic, increased material costs, lack of housing supply, and labor shortages in the construction industry. Idaho routinely funds transportation projects, which is very important and should continue to be funded by the state – but housing affordability is equally important to our communities and residents. Transportation costs are not factored into housing affordability. True affordability is affected by the cost of both housing and transportation.

Our workforces are being directly affected by the lack of available housing and lack of options within price points that our essential workers can afford. Idaho communities need our essential workers and service industry members, and they need access to housing options. Idaho communities are being challenged with retaining local businesses and recruiting new ones, and housing is a major factor. Economic prosperity is critical for maintaining our vibrant communities.

While many of our resort communities have had these challenges for years, all of Idaho is feeling the pain. The time is now to figure out all of the available tools and partnerships to tackle workforce and missing middle housing solutions. The ARPA funds are eligible for this type of use and should be used to support Idaho communities as we address this extremely important issue.

We urge you to vote YES on HB 701. The provisions included in the bill would benefit all of Idaho. Funding the Idaho Workforce Housing Fund will bridge the funding gap and provide access to safe and stable homes for this overlooked segment of the housing spectrum, and help keep our local economies strong. If our legislature votes no on this important bill, we all lose.
Thank you for your consideration in this important and timely matter.

Sincerely,

Hilary Anderson
President

cc.

Senate Commerce and Human Resources Committee Members:
Fred S. Martin
Todd M. Lakey
Jim Guthrie
Jeff Agenbroad
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Bill Sponsor, Representative Megan Blanksma, House Ways and Means Committee
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Association of Idaho Cities (Kelley Packer, Rob McQuade)

Idaho Association of Counties (Seth Grigg)

Idaho Smart Growth (Elaine Clegg)

Urban Land Institute, Idaho (Karlee May)

APA Idaho Legislative Committee (Joel Plaskon, Patricia Nilsson)