



January 20, 2021

Representative Pollet, Chair, House Local Government Committee, and members of the committee,

The Washington State Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA Washington) respectfully submits comments **in opposition to House Bill 1627**, which would significantly weaken a core growth management tool for protecting rural areas from urban encroachment.

- One of the primary goals of the Growth Management Act is to protect rural areas from sprawl. Page 12, line 26, the statement “does not permit low-density sprawl” is proposed to change to “moderates low-density sprawl.” Accordingly, allowing urban services including sewer and water outside of Urban Growth Areas *will* permit sprawl and have significant negative impacts on rural uses including agriculture and forestry, as well as natural resources including rivers, streams, wetlands and wildlife habitat.
- The bill removes the requirement that expansion of urban services be consistent with adopted comprehensive plans. Page 22, lines 1-7, state that a finding of noncompliance cannot be based on “if such facilities or services are inconsistent with the comprehensive plans of the city or county, development regulations or other plan or policy ...” If there is no requirement for consistency between counties’ and cities’ policies, plans and regulations, then our state’s coordinated planning framework is significantly weakened.
- The bill would make it difficult if not impossible for jurisdictions to reach transportation concurrency, since facilities must meet the demands of development and are tied to comprehensive land use plans.
- The bill would compromise SEPA and Shoreline Management Act and critical areas laws because those rules are updated to be consistent with adopted comprehensive plan but the expansion of urban service would not need to be consistent under the bill.
- The bill undermines the Boundary Review Board. Page 20, line 19-21, states that a Boundary Review Board cannot find noncompliance “due to the existence of or extension of water, storm drainage or sewerage systems beyond city or urban growth boundaries;” The Boundary Review Board are the only local avenue for an objective, nonpolitical, multijurisdictional and open public forum to consider urban growth.
- The GMA ‘s public process requirements are gutted under this bill. The action can occur by fiat with no advance planning or public review. After the action, there are no methods of appeal:
 - No public hearings under either the city or the county are required;
 - No finding of noncompliance appeals through the Growth Management Boards are allowed;

- No review by the Boundary Reviews Boards; and
- No appeal to the courts.
- The bill appears to allow vesting of development and facilities even prior to any action of a city extending water or sewer facilities beyond the city limits and designated urban growth areas.
- The legality of this bill regarding other state statutes of takings and due public process should be called into question.
- The bill does not address need or threat. The Growth Management Act already allows expansion of urban services outside of Urban Growth Area boundaries for protection of public health and safety or the environment. If there is another reason, based on need or threat, under which expansion of urban services should be allowed then it could be added to this provision.

The appropriate process to ensure coordinated and planned urban growth is for counties to first expand their Urban Growth Area boundary, consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, countywide planning policies, and state law, and then to extend urban services to support planned urban densities. The only reason for urban services to be extended beyond Urban Growth Area boundaries should be for protection of public health and safety or the environment. We urge that this bill be removed from consideration.

[APA Washington](#) is a 1,400-member association of public and private sector professional planners, planning commissioners and elected officials, among others. We work every day to implement the state's growth management and planning framework and appreciate the opportunity to provide information that will help improve it for all Washingtonians. Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,



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