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State of Utah

UTAH SEISMIC SAFETY COMMISSION

KEITH D. KOPER, Ph.D.
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JESSICA CHAPPELL, S.E.
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Vice Chairs

9 February 2021

Rep. Andrew Stoddard
218 E 8135 S
Sandy, UT, 84070

Re: Support for HB214

Dear Representative Stoddard,

On behalf of the Utah Seismic Safety Commission (USSC) I am writing to express support for HB214, entitled "Disclosure of Unreinforced Masonry Buildings Act". The USSC was established by the Utah legislature in 1994 and charged with reviewing earthquake hazards in Utah and advising state and local governments on policies that reduce the risk from earthquakes. The USSC is composed of 15 volunteer members who represent a wide range of agencies and organizations:

*University of Utah Seismograph Stations
Utah Geological Survey
Structural Engineers Association of Utah
American Public Works Association
Utah Division of Emergency Management
American Institute of Architects
Utah Div. of Facilities & Construction Management*

*Utah Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
Utah Insurance Department
American Society of Civil Engineers
Utah League of Cities and Towns
Utah Department of Transportation
Utah State Board of Education*

At the quarterly meeting on 21 January 2021, USSC members discussed the merits of HB214. Because of the grave danger posed by unreinforced masonry structures (URMs) during ground shaking from earthquakes, the members enthusiastically supported the idea expressed in HB214 that property owners should disclose the existence of unreinforced masonry structures when seeking to sell or lease their property. USSC members voted 12 yes, 0 no, and 1 abstention in favor of a motion to formally support HB214.

The USSC members understand that passage of HB214 may add administrative overhead to private real estate transactions; however, we feel that any undesirable consequences associated with HB214 are outweighed by the enormous good that would come from better awareness of URMs in Utah. Failure of URMs during ground shaking is the leading cause of injuries and fatalities during earthquakes. Damage to these structures also accounts for a disproportionate share of economic losses and displaced residents even after moderate-sized earthquakes. We note that Utah currently has a larger building stock of URMs than the entire state of California.

As we were reminded by the magnitude 5.7 earthquake in Magna, Utah, on 18 March 2020, residents of Utah live in earthquake country and they live, work, and go to school in buildings prone to earthquake-related damage. Passage of HB214 would be an important step forward in making Utah more resilient to the future earthquakes that are destined to occur in our state and the surrounding region.

Sincerely,

Keith D. Koper, Chair
Utah Seismic Safety Commission

Supported by:

Utah Division of Emergency Management
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Utah Geological Survey
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