

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Andersen, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2400, HB 2422, and HB 2316. I am writing to urge you to vote against these three bills.

I am an Oregonian and resident of Bend, who opposes HB 2400, HB 2422, and HB 2316, which will collectively negatively affect the agricultural, forested, and public lands that sustain our communities- particularly in rural central Oregon. These bills weaken our state's land use system by disregarding carefully crafted laws that encourage smart growth and the protection of agricultural and forest lands that Oregonians rely on for food, natural resources, recreation, and jobs. It also threatens to further fragment critical habitat, threatening already vulnerable wildlife and expediting the extinction crisis.

HB 2400 would fragment Oregon's agricultural and forest lands by allowing an additional house on every rural property. It is written in a way to encourage short-term resale, with no safeguards for protecting these valuable lands that feed our communities. People who want or need an extra home on their rural property already have a variety of mechanisms to secure such a home, including seven different ways on farm land and 6 ways on forest lands. Plus, Oregon law already allows new homes for relatives of agricultural and forest land managers, and additional new homes for unrelated farmworkers.

HB 2422 would enable sprawling development to creep across rural landscapes from the outside-in by allowing counties to bypass land use laws to more than double the density to allow rezoning. This bill counter-acts critical programs that aim to make urban areas more climate-friendly, equitable, and resilient- by concentrating on planning initiatives that will allow for greater public transit and biking/walking. It also puts homes and infrastructure at greater risk of wildfire, with less emergency services. Additionally, this bill threatens the very nature of our land use planning system, by bypassing Goal 1, to ensure that everyone, not just well-financed individual landowners, have access to the planning process. Our land use planning program intentionally includes safeguards, encouraging development where it is less costly, where sufficient infrastructure exists, where people have access to equitable transportation options, and where agricultural and forestry operations won't be impacted. Its entire mission is to balance natural resource protection with development- to preserve what makes Oregon, Oregon.

HB 2316 would disregard our sensitive natural areas that Oregon has built a national reputation on and creates a false solution to housing needs. Sprawling development outside UGBs on public lands is expensive, and would only benefit wealthy individuals who could afford valuable properties on sought-after lands. This in no way targets the demographic that needs housing most—low income individuals. Developing lands outside our cities and towns will also require significant infrastructure costs to become viable for building homes, and this bill would unnecessarily burden the state with those costs – before housing is even built. This would put even more strain on financial resources from the state and local governments, without actually

addressing the real problems. Furthermore, this bill would adversely impact natural resources and public lands- that are held in public trust for all Oregonians to enjoy. As mentioned above, it would fragment critical habitat and threaten wildlife, and also perpetuate negative human-wildlife interactions and risk of wildfire. We cannot afford to further these issues during an ecological and climate crisis– started by irresponsible development.

There are smarter, more affordable ways to build housing and we need to focus on public lands inside UGBs for housing development – where people can walk to school, see their neighborhood doctor, pick up produce from the corner grocer, live within a thriving community, while also having access to fresh produce and wild lands outside the UGB.

Thank you for considering my comments and allowing this opportunity for public input.

Sincerely,
Annie Merrill
Bend Resident