

## **Public comment on HB2400**

“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 comment on HB 2400

I am strongly in favor of Oregon building more low-income and affordable housing, **however, not at the expense of Oregon farmland protections that have kept Oregon’s farm economy and land from being lost to alternative uses.** As currently written, this bill disregards existing laws, especially our land use laws that encourage smart growth and the protection of agricultural and forest lands that Oregonians rely on for food, fiber, and jobs.”

As written, I am opposed to this bill. 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. These loopholes will be a regrettable decision when we would look back 10 years down the road.

**HB 2400 is unnecessary.** There are already seven different ways to get a new house approved on farm land, and six different ways to get a new house approved on forest lands. Oregon law already allows new homes for relatives of agricultural and forest land managers. It also allows additional new homes for unrelated farm workers.

**HB 2400 is harmful to agricultural and forest land.** Oregon counties already approve hundreds of new houses in exclusive farm use and forest conservation zones each year. They also convert thousands of acres of agricultural and forest land for residential development.

- **The American Farmland Trust estimates that roughly half of the farmland conversion in Oregon between 2001 and 2016 was due to low-density residential development.**
- HB 2400’s outright doubling of rural residential densities threatens Oregon’s No. 2 and No. 3 industries that depend on large blocks of undeveloped land to operate.
- Locating more housing in and around farm and forest areas increases conflicts with common farming and forestry practices, increases traffic on farm roads, creates additional demand on limited water resources, and can increase wildfire risk.
- More houses on agricultural and forest land increase the cost of those lands to purchase or lease, putting it out of the reach of the next generation of farmers and forest land managers. The mere opportunity for additional residential development drives up land prices beyond what farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers can afford.

We already have been losing too much farmland to development. We need to find the ways that we can incentivize development without also encouraging short-term resale, with no safeguards for protecting these valuable lands that feed our communities. We also should do more to promote

and support our small family farmers to enable them to keep the important Oregon products we all think of AS OREGON....hazelnuts, marionberries, Oregon strawberries, Hermiston watermelons, mint, lavender, sweet onions, etc. thriving. What will Oregon be if we lose this identity and access to the most local and wonderful food sources. **Please go back to the drawing board to find other ways to gain the housing we need. This bill is not meeting Oregon values in doing so.**

***Jennifer Valentine***

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