

Submitter: Robert L and Gretchen Pederson
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Housing and Homelessness
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2400

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Andersen and Breese-Iverson, and Committee Members,

As concerned residents of rural Deschutes County, we are asking you to oppose HB 2400.

Allowing second dwellings in exclusive farm use and forest zones—as well as the nearly one million acres of land outside UGBs zoned for rural residential use in Oregon—would threaten Oregon’s farmland, would not help with affordable housing, would put intense pressure on our groundwater, add to our wildfire risk, and put pressure on road maintenance and emergency services.

An additional problem with this misguided bill is that permitting housing “for relatives” can easily result in resale. If an application is approved, the family member can soon move out, and the owner could lease the home for 18 months and then sell it to anyone.

Please consider the following issues that would be affected by this proposed bill:

- o Farms and Forests need protection— Oregon’s land use laws exist to keep farm and forest lands productive. HB 2400 would allow additional housing on these lands without requiring that housing to support agriculture or forestry, driving up land costs and making it harder for farmers and foresters to continue their work.
- o If would not help with affordable housing – We guess that part of the push for this idea is to provide more affordable housing. The shortage of rentals and homes for working class people is a widespread and difficult problem throughout the country. It is admirable that attempts are being made to address this issue, but increasing the population density in rural areas is not a reasonable solution. These properties are far from any services and are unlikely to be affordable. There is no public transportation, so anyone who lives in rural areas must drive. This results in high gas costs and increases our local carbon footprint. There are no grocery stores, and most employment opportunities are within the city limit. Any attempt to increase affordable housing should be concentrated within the Urban Boundaries of cities, not by allowing sprawl into places far from town.
- o Water is in short supply –Climate change, drought, changes in snowpack and rainfall all contribute to the existing shortage of water. It will get worse in years to come. Wells are going dry in my neighborhood and elsewhere in rural lands. Our irrigation water has been rationed for several years in a row. More rural housing would mean more wells and septic systems, straining already limited water supplies and risking groundwater contamination.
- o Wildlife needs open space – In Central Oregon, mule deer populations are plummeting due to habitat loss. Increasing development in sensitive areas would worsen this crisis and could impact other species as well.

- o Wildfire Risk is serious – Oregon’s rural lands are already vulnerable to fires as is underscored by the new fire risk map. More homes mean more human-caused fires and more people in danger when fires occur.
- o There would be strains to road maintenance and emergency services – If housing density increases in rural areas, will there be additional funding for the higher demand for road maintenance, sheriffs, fire trucks, and ambulances? Who will pay for this?

Please protect Oregon’s rural lands and reject HB 2400. Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Robert and Gretchen Pederson

Tumalo, Oregon