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House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 3172 – Support for proactive, equitable, cost-effective home hardening program

Co-Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Gamba, Vice-Chair Levy, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3172. Central Oregon LandWatch is a land use and conservation advocacy organization that has protected Central Oregon's forests, high desert, rivers, wildlife, and communities for more than 35 years. LandWatch recognizes that fire is a natural and regular phenomenon on our landscape and that strengthening our ability to withstand wildfire threats is essential to creating a livable future in Central Oregon.

LandWatch supports HB 3172. This bill provides policy direction and funding to the Oregon State Fire Marshal (OSFM) to establish the "Wildfire Prepared Structure Program." The Program would create financial incentives for individuals rebuilding after a wildfire and assist homeowners in the wildland-urban interface to retrofit their dwellings before wildfire strikes. Importantly, HB 3172 directs OSFM to prioritize home hardening for socially vulnerable and low-income communities and to support measures that have proven to be cost-effective via a "demonstrated positive ratio of benefits to costs."

Last summer, record-breaking wildfire activity took place again in Central Oregon. From the Mile Marker 132 Fire, which threatened my home in Northeast Bend, to the Darlene 3 Fire, which forced thousands of La Pine residents to evacuate, extreme weather was a constant challenge. The wildfire season even extended into late October, with the Pine Fire and Little Lava Fire threatening thousands of structures, closing Mt. Bachelor, and raining ash down on the City of Bend. Unfortunately, there is no indication that 2025 will be any easier.

While fuels treatment and forest management have a limited role to play in mitigating fire danger, cost-effective home hardening is the best and most cost-effective way to directly ensure that at-risk communities can live with fire in the future. With that in mind, LandWatch urges the Committee to prioritize the vital and proactive home hardening program created by HB 3172.

Thank you,
Robin Hayakawa
Associate Staff Attorney



WE DEFEND AND PLAN FOR CENTRAL OREGON'S LIVABLE FUTURE



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