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June 22, 2023

House Committee on Rules
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Testimony SB 70-A

To Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Kropf and Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee:

As a Nyssa, Oregon resident and farm owner I'm writing in opposition to SB 70-A. Malheur County is the poorest county in Oregon and with current interest rates, cost of living increases, and increasing homelessness in Oregon due to soaring housing costs, Malheur County needs affordable housing, not housing only a few can afford. As someone on the Eastern Oregon Economic Development board once stated, "Who wouldn't want to live in the country?" I agree; however, the question should be, "Who can afford to build a home in the country?" As an example, in 2018 a three-story 5,800+SF home was built next to ours on approximately eight acres. Very few people can afford to purchase bare ground and build this size of a home, even on two acres as SB 70-A would allow.

Our farm is between Nyssa and Adrian and the character of our area has changed greatly since we bought our farm in 1997. For some examples:

- We have beautiful views of the Owyhee mountains that now include a solar farm. I'm not opposed to the solar farm, it's unobtrusive; however, once it reaches the end of its 'life,' around 2039, this ground will be open to other industrial development. In addition, this parcel of ground has been approved for a cell tower, and depending on the height of the tower, not just the tower but potentially a 24/7 blinking light will impact my and my neighbors' views. In conjunction with the cell tower, this property has also been approved for up to two residential homes.

<https://www.malheurco.org/wp-content/uploads/Departments/Planning/Documents/2022/9-September/Buchholz-NFD-NFP-2022-08-0011-014-10387.pdf>

- Across the street from the solar farm on Owyhee Avenue, an RV park has been approved (allowed on properties zoned CA-1/EFU). This was met with a lot of public opposition from neighbors due to safety concerns with a transient population, in addition to concerns of increased traffic, noise and lighting. A new bar recently opened at Owyhee Junction, next door to the RV park, so the neighbors' concerns are still valid.

- An enormous power pole was erected on our property in 2018 to provide our neighbor's home with underground power. The pole is an eyesore, devalues our property, and the underground lines affect our lengthy irrigation ditch that requires relocation for safety issues. (Idaho Power began installing the pole in the middle of our front yard until I asked an employee why he was digging up my yard.)

My point is that there's no shortage of development in our area, and as evidenced by the growth in my neighborhood there's an awkward mix of residential, industrial and recreational growth in the midst of high-value farm ground.

My other concern with the bill, if approved, is how the 100 homes would be allocated within Malheur County and how these homes would affect water rights. For example, there's a 21-acre farm on the east side of our property. Per the bill, if this ground is fallow for three years 10 homes could be built there. And if we subdivided our 24 acres there could be up to 22 new homes in one area. Would each parcel owner be able to apply for water rights? The farm ground purchased for our neighbor's home no longer had water rights, so they applied for and received rights. As a result, what used to be our sole irrigation-water delivery line is now split three ways (to also accommodate another farmer). We irrigate infrequently, so this isn't an issue for us; however, this needs to be considered for income-producing farms that may have to compete for water.

Furthermore, fire and police services are very limited in Malheur County. (This was a concern of people who opposed the RV park.) We had an RV catch fire several years ago and it took so long for the Nyssa fire department to respond that the RV was a total loss. (We live seven miles from town.) Fortunately our house and shop didn't catch on fire, but our house incurred damage from the heat. Others might not be so fortunate, thus limitations of fire and law enforcement services must also be taken into serious consideration when reviewing SB 70-A.

Malheur County is in desperate need of affordable housing. Well-paying jobs are limited in our county, so we need more immediate and more equitable housing opportunities and a bill that protects existing farm ground, high-value or otherwise.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,

Kristin Schoorl

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Nyssa, Oregon