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GORGEFRIENDS.ORG

February 26, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing & Development

Re: SB 438, SB 878 - OPPOSE

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Committee Members:

Friends of the Columbia Gorge (“Friends”) is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

**Friends strongly opposes SB 438 and SB 878.** These bills threaten Oregon’s agricultural and forest lands by permitting an extra house on properties outside of Urban Growth Boundaries, allowing for increased density in the state’s rural lands.

Landowners who wish to add an additional home on their property already have various options available to them currently—six different methods on forest land and seven on farmland. Additionally, Oregon law permits the construction of new homes for relatives and non-relatives of agricultural and forest land managers.

While these bills state that the new dwellings constructed would be for relatives of the owner, the language of the bills are significantly lacking in any protection to ensure that remains the case. While the initial process allows for an additional dwelling to be occupied by a relative, once the application is approved, the owner can lease the house to anyone for 18 months. Following that period, the owner is allowed to sell the house to anyone. There is no requirement that the home remain occupied by a family member.

It’s crucial that we protect our farm and forest lands. Allowing another permissible route of constructing additional dwellings on rural properties will drive up land costs, creating barriers for future farmers and forest land managers to purchase land. It will also increase traffic on already strained rural roads, heighten wildfire risks, put additional pressure on water resources, and negatively impact local forests, wildlife, and farm animals.

We strongly urge the committee to oppose SB 438 and SB 878, as they would result in significant and harmful consequences for Oregon’s rural farm and forest lands.

Sincerely,  
Madison Kenney



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Conservation Organizer