

Friends of  
**French Prairie**

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Friends of French Prairie  
is an Oregon non-profit corporation

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March 3, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire  
Re: SB 78 – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and Committee Members;

We submit this testimony in support of this bill because Oregon land use laws authorize “replacement dwellings” for homeowners in farm and forest zones who have lost their homes to natural disaster or decay. This is a narrow hardship exception designed to help homeowners quickly and reliably replace the home they lost, and it does not require the standard review process for siting new homes in exclusive farm and forest zones.

However, wealthy landowners and speculators are abusing this lack of review criteria to tear down modest homes and build large, expensive country estates unrelated to growing food and fiber. This bill helps address this misuse by limiting the scale of “replacement dwellings,” thereby reducing the speculative attraction of agricultural and forest lands for luxury homesite development.

This bill is a study in common sense and good governance. When Oregon land use laws were passed, they never intended for replacement dwellings to be McMansions and effectively take farm and forest land out of production by turning them into estates! Doing so hurts family farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers who need large blocks of undeveloped agricultural and forest land for efficient food and fiber production.

As the land use advocacy group in French Prairie, we hope you will focus on the need for stricter “replacement dwelling” rules that allows for the modernization or necessary rebuilding of existing homes within agricultural zones. The replacement of modest with luxury homes is an abuse of the limited authorization for “replacement dwellings” in Oregon’s exclusive farm and forest zones.

Oregon’s farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers – especially people who are just growing their businesses – are finding it increasingly difficult to locate land they can afford to lease or purchase. This drives up the price of nearby agricultural and forest land, and encourages the displacement of those who traditionally live and work in these areas. Please stop the land speculation and conversion of Oregon’s limited agricultural and forest land by supporting this bill

Sincerely



Ben Williams, President