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Helping to shape the use of our natural resources to protect the quality of life in Yamhill County.

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TO: Representative Julie Fahey, Chair  
House Committee on Housing

FROM: Friends of Yamhill County

RE: HB 3072, Urban Growth Boundary Expansions for Workforce Housing

DATE: March 4, 2021

Friends of Yamhill County works to protect natural resources through the implementation of land use planning goals, policies, and laws that maintain and improve the present and future quality of life in Yamhill County for both urban and rural residents. The Friends of Yamhill County is opposed to House Bill 3072.

While the bill may be intended to address a pressing need in Oregon, the approach is unsound and it contains flaws as discussed below. Please enter this letter into the record of the March 4, 2021 hearing.

Section 2(2) of HB 3072 would *require* local governments to amend the urban growth boundary (UGB) for a city at a property owner's request under certain circumstances: (1) The land must be in a legally established urban reserve; (2) urban services will be provided within two years; (3) the land can only be used for workforce housing and related commercial uses for 60 years; and (4) the land is not high-value farmland or protected for open space, scenic, historic, or natural resource values.

### **Urban Reserves**

Urban reserves are those areas designated by a city and county where a city's UGB will expand when a need for additional urban land is demonstrated. UGBs are required to have enough land with appropriate plan and zone designations to accommodate the expected need for workforce and other types of housing for approximately 20 years. When a city expands its UGB into a

reserve, the expansion is accompanied by an analysis of alternative areas to decide which area is the best for the city's – not an individual property owner's – future. The UGB expansion considers the appropriate location considering provision of public services such as streets and water lines. HB 3072 would circumvent these purposes and short-circuit public involvement in the decision.

If the urban area does not contain an adequate supply of land for workforce housing, existing opportunities exist for the local governments to remedy the shortfall. These opportunities include public processes, not out-of-sight deals between a property owner and service providers.

The Oregon Legislature has passed bills to require cities to plan for an adequate housing supply and appropriated funds to help them complete the work. It is too early to give up on these efforts and permit unplanned urban growth.

### **Urban Services**

The bill, if enacted, would only allow the UGB expansion if a commitment is made to provide the expansion area with urban services within two years. The bill does not require an assessment of whether urban services will continue to be available to areas already inside the UGB. The decision on where to provide urban services is and should be a deliberative process that considers the long-term needs of the whole urban area.

### **Commitment to Workforce Housing**

While the bill provides a definition of “workforce commercial,” other than a 2,000 square-foot limitation it includes no guidance on how a local government should interpret “of a type and scale supportive of nearby households in workforce housing,” an element of that definition. Additionally, we see nothing that would prevent a property owner from developing commercial use that is “supportive of” existing neighborhoods inside the UGB, and never providing the workforce housing in the expansion area.

### **High-Value Farmland**

We do not believe that *any* farmland should be included in a UGB before the land is needed. The determination of need should be based on a public process considering what is appropriate for the whole urban area. Farmland, even if inside an urban reserve and not high-value, is not just vacant land waiting to be urbanized, it is part of Oregon's second-leading industry and employer – agriculture.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.