

Chairman Marsh, Vice Chairman Andersen, members of the Housing and Homelessness Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in **OPPOSITION** to HB3928.

I am Shelley Wetherell, a fourth-generation farmer in Douglas County. My husband and I have been farming together for over 50 years and currently raise wine grapes, sheep, and timber. I am a firm believer that land use laws have significantly contributed to our ability to continue to farm.

HB3928 appears to be everything a legitimate farmer or forester would hate and everything a developer or speculator would love. It is about allowing houses in farm and forest lands without any connection to the land, with few sideboards, and without any concern for the impacts on existing nearby resource uses.

Realism does not justify that under this bill, a piece of farm or ranch property can sit unused for three years even though it may be the best soil and or have been farmed for ninety-seven of the last one hundred years, yet it would qualify for residential use; or forestland could be clear cut, with an extension or exception to replanting, and in three years qualify for residential use.

Clearly passage of this bill would remove potentially productive farm and forest land from our available supply, add more conflicts between farm and non-farm neighbors, and drive-up land prices.

Outside the Willamette Valley there is already a similar smaller option with stricter criteria for limited parcelization for homes not tied to farming known as non-resource or non-farm dwellings. There also exists the option to take an exception on unusable farmland for subdivisions. Unlike the development under HB3928, these are both land use decisions with a chance for citizen participation to make sure that an applicant accurately follows the rules. Development in HB3928 clearly fits the definition of a “land use” decision and in fairness should never be exempt.

Placing dwellings willy-nilly throughout farm and forest lands is not a plan that will help solve the state’s housing needs. It will only exacerbate wildfire issues, increase costs to taxpayers for infrastructure, and make it harder and more expensive for farmers, ranchers, and forest owners to do their jobs.

I urge you not to move HB3928 forward. Thank you.



Shelley Wetherell  
Umpqua, Oregon