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March 6, 2025

Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 77 – Support

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 77. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a land use and conservation advocacy organization that, for more than 35 years, has protected Central Oregon’s farm and forest lands, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and vibrant communities. We work to conserve the region’s ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and working rural lands balanced with a responsible, sustainable approach to planning and fostering thriving communities.

LandWatch supports SB 77. This bill would clarify the scope and scale of business and commercial activities that may be permitted as “home occupations” on rural lands in Oregon. In recent years, home occupations have been approved to allow large luxury hospitality facilities on farm and forest lands. Such enterprises go far beyond the intent of allowing a small-scale business operation as a home occupation.

SB 77 would require home occupations to be secondary to the residential use of a home. This makes sense. A home occupation is a business or commercial activity conducted within the walls of a residential building; a business or commercial activity should not subsume the residential use of a property. Other avenues for permitting larger commercial activities on rural lands already exist, particularly as agritourism activities permitted under ORS 215.283(4)-(6). Agritourism permits allow up to 18 tourism events per year on farmland, with varying criteria depending on how many events are sought. In all cases, agritourism activities must be incidental and subordinate to the farm use of the property. SB 77 would impose the same reasonable standard on home occupation activities, ensuring that home occupation activities are incidental and subordinate to the primary use of the dwelling for residential use.

The impacts of large-scale hospitality and other commercial activities permitted as home occupations go beyond the bounds of a single property. These activities create conflicts for working farm and forest operators. They drive up the cost of farm and forestland through speculation. They overburden rural infrastructure like roads, wells, and on-site wastewater systems.



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SB 77 would require common-sense limitations on home occupations. The intent of home occupations is to allow small-scale business or commercial activities inside and accessory to a home. SB 77 would update the letter of the law to match the intent.

LandWatch respectfully requests this Committee pass SB 77 out of committee.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Regards,

Rory Isbell
Rural Lands Program Director & Staff Attorney
Central Oregon LandWatch



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