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February 9, 2025

Rep. Pam Marsh  
House Committee on Housing and Homelessness  
State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2422 – Urbanizing Oregon’s Rural Lands

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Andersen, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities, protect family farms, forests and natural areas, and provide transportation and housing choices for all Oregonians. **We oppose HB 2422.**

One of the bedrocks of Oregon’s planning program is the containment of urban development within the state’s 242 urban growth boundaries (UGBs). Even small towns like Pilot Rock, Carlton, and Metolius have UGBs. Land outside these boundaries is intended as “rural,” which means sparsely settled with few, if any, public services. Denser development requiring more services is directed to our many cities and towns.

Based largely on development patterns that were established before the advent of the planning program in 1973, Oregon has already almost one million acres of land, outside UGBs, designated for low-density rural residential development, with minimum lot sizes ranging from two to twenty acres.<sup>1</sup> HB 2422 would open up an unknown percentage of these lands for 1-acre suburban subdivisions.

Introducing thousands of new expensive, large-lot homesites into rural communities not only changes the character of a community from rural to suburban, but the doubling of densities in certain rural areas would threaten water resources, wildlife habitat, and generate high levels of climate-changing automobile traffic. Building suburban communities requires tax increases to build and maintain a network of roads and emergency services to provide the necessary levels of services. It also increases the

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<sup>1</sup> The former Oregon Legislative Committee Services reported that Oregon has 995,116 acres of land designated for rural development. Approximately 781,836 acres of land is designated for urban development across Oregon

negative impacts and costs for the working lands and natural resources that surround these islands of dense development.

Oregon already has an established process for increasing rural densities. Oregon law authorizes counties to allow one-acre homesites in rural communities through the exceptions process, a well-established planning process that requires them to consider, for example:

1. Whether the increased development in rural areas will be more difficult and costly to serve;
2. Whether there is sufficient infrastructure in place to serve more than twice as many new homes;
3. The transportation implications of doubling the number of houses in rural areas;
4. Whether the increased development will negatively impact surrounding agricultural and forestry operations; and
5. Whether the increased density would make future urban growth boundary expansions more difficult and costly, if not impossible.

This bill bypasses the benefits of requiring counties to plan for additional rural development through the exceptions process, or through the Big Look provisions of ORS 215.788-.794, both of which are designed to avoid unintended negative impacts on Oregon's limited and precious resources. These planning processes also ensure an equal playing field where everyone, not just well-financed individual landowners, have access to a planning process to determine where increased densities are, and are not, appropriate.

1000 Friends supports a community-planned approach to development, as opposed to a haphazard, ad hoc process. We encourage lease vote "no" on HB 2422.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,



Jim Johnson  
Working Lands Policy Director