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February 10, 2025

House Committee on Housing & Homelessness

Re: HB 2316 - OPPOSE

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Anderson, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and Committee Members:

Friends of the Columbia Gorge (“Friends”) is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

HB 2316 presents a clear threat to Oregon’s public lands by allowing state lands to be designated as “Home Start Lands” to be used for housing. This bill would supersede existing land use laws and allow state owned land managed by the Department of Transportation, the State Forestry Department, and the State Department of Fish & Wildlife to be repurposed as land for first time homebuyers and affordable housing projects. This bill would give the Department of Administrative Services significant discretion to determine whether lands which have not yet been given a permanent state purpose could be better used for housing, without a clear metric by how this would be determined.

Lands outside of Urban Growth Boundaries are a poor location for developments to resolve the challenge of affordable housing needs. Lands within UGBs are much better suited for developing new housing and creating affordable housing solutions, as they are in much closer proximity to public transportation, employment opportunities, medical care, schools, grocery stores, and social services. Development outside of UGBs is costly and would place a significant burden on the taxpayers and require the state to pay for all infrastructure.

Additionally, allowing lands contiguous to an Urban Growth Boundary to be used for housing development, would thwart orderly urbanization of cities and towns and lead to urban sprawl on state owned lands, causing a loss of open space, habitat degradation, and negative impacts on our state’s natural resources.

Please oppose HB 2316 as it presents a clear threat to state lands and existing land use laws.

Sincerely,
Madison Kenney
Conservation Organizer