

Submitter: Ann Skelton
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1578

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 1578. Please vote no on this bill.

Oregon has been a leader in protecting farms, ranches, forests and the livelihoods they provide for our citizens. We are so fortunate to have natural resource lands but they are not infinite; many of these are our working lands. This bill would allow rural communities to rezone up to 50 acres of these lands for urban development without considering the impacts on agriculture and forestry lands, wildlife habitat and cultural resources but most importantly how new urban uses might negatively affect water supply. How might this bill affect water rights and sharing of water? Allowing urban uses in natural resource and ag lands ups the risk of wildfire and the destruction of those resources. We know firsthand that our state in late summer is like kindling, and it has been proven that human behavior is responsible for most fires.

Oregon has strong urban growth boundary laws. UGAs keep urban uses in areas where the infrastructure is already in place. Allowing piecemeal 50-acres pockets means sprawl with no organized development pattern. It has been proven that sprawl is costly, difficult to serve, and increases automobile use which is the antithesis to smart growth. Visit California or Arizona and see what sprawl looks like.

Allowing 50-acre parcels of urban density is a recipe for land use conflicts. Cities already know the conflicts between ADU rentals and homeowners and most cities and towns in Oregon have regulations regarding short term rentals. Expanding this potential use into natural resources and ag areas will expand tourism into areas we want keep for food production. We know that short term rentals drive up prices exacerbating housing unavailability. Expanding housing into forests and wildlife areas is not good policy.

Thank you for considering my comments. Please do what is right for Oregon and vote no on SB 1578.

Thank you.

Ann Skelton