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March 24, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 1129 – Oppose as currently written

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1129. 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 opposes SB 1129 as currently written. The bill would direct the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) to amend its rules relating to the prioritization of lands added to urban reserves. The bill, at Section 2, would direct LCDC to raise the priority of certain agricultural lands for UGB expansion. The agricultural lands this section targets are protected for farm use under Goal 3 of the statewide planning system. Especially in Central and Eastern Oregon, where livestock grazing of range lands and unirrigated crop production like dryland wheat are widespread, these lands are rightfully designated as agricultural lands and protected for farm use. These lands should not “jump the line” for urban reserve inclusion ahead of certain rural residential exception areas and nonresource lands, which are already zoned for housing.

LandWatch supports urban reserves designations for a number of reasons. Designation of urban reserves allows a city to secure a 30-50-year land supply for potential UGB expansions. Lands designated as urban reserve lands become first priority for UGB expansion. Urban reserve designations can provide valuable certainty to local governments, landowners, and the public about future UGB expansion locations that greatly streamline UGB expansion decisions and facilitate long-term infrastructure and public facilities planning.

Our conversations with the City of Bend and other stakeholders concerning urban reserves policy are ongoing, and we recommend amendments to SB 1129 that would remove Section 2. We are open to other proposals that would give cities clearer direction about prioritizing certain rural residential exception areas and non-resource lands above other, harder-to-urbanize similar lands, but that maintain the current prioritization process at OAR 660-021-0030(3).



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In sum, we are opposed to SB 1129 *as currently written*, but look forward to weighing in on expected amendments which may change our position.

Regards,

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Central Oregon LandWatch



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