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March 26, 2025

House Committee on Housing & Homelessness

Re: HB 2316 – OPPOSE, HB 2316-1 – OPPOSE, HB 2316-2 – NEUTRAL

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.

Friends opposes HB 2316-1 but is neutral on HB 2316-2. The base bill and the -1 as written present a clear threat to Oregon’s public lands by allowing state lands, including those outside of Urban Growth Boundaries, to be designated as “Home Start Lands” to be used for housing. This bill would supersede existing land use laws and require the Department of Administrative Services to recommend lands, including rural lands, owned by the Department of Transportation, the State Forestry Department, the State Parks & Recreation Department, the State Department of Fish & Wildlife, and the Department of State Lands for repurposing for first time homebuyers and affordable housing projects.

With the -2 limiting “Home Start Lands” to within UGBs, Friends changes its position to neutral. Lands outside of Urban Growth Boundaries are a poor location for developments to resolve the challenge of affordable housing needs due to infrastructure costs and displacement of vulnerable populations outside of towns. 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. In addition, far-flung development typically requires driving long distances to these places, increasing costs (both direct driving costs and infrastructure costs) and greenhouse gas emissions. Development outside of UGBs is costly and would place a significant burden on the taxpayers.

Friends continues to oppose the base bill. Please adopt the -2 amendment instead of the -1, as it addresses Friends’ primary concerns with the original bill.

Sincerely,
Madison Kenney
Conservation Organizer