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March 26, 2021

House Committee on Energy and Environment  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

***Testimony: Support for HB 2488***

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Smith, and Members of the Committee,

Oregon's land use planning system has been a key tool in the State's arsenal to fight climate change long before climate change was a widespread concern, but it does not explicitly address climate change adaptation, mitigation, or environmental justice for disadvantaged communities. That is why Central Oregon LandWatch strongly supports HB 2488 to create a new statewide land use planning goal addressing climate equity.

Since 1973, our groundbreaking land use system has limited Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions by keeping development compact, reducing average vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in cities and towns, keeping open space, farms, and forest lands available for use as carbon sinks, and promoting more dense development inside cities (which is inherently more energy and water efficient). It has also helped communities reduce risk of natural hazards by requiring them to be considered during planning processes – especially reducing the risk of destruction by wildfire by limiting sprawl into the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

Climate change will have an unequal impact. In Oregon and across the globe, the people who are most at risk are not the ones who contributed the most to this problem. A handful of large corporations and a society based on unsustainable resource use created this catastrophe. But if we don't act to change anything, poor people, BIPOC communities, our children, and other vulnerable groups will be the ones who pay for it the most (and indeed they already do).

HB 2488 will help those most at risk of climate change by requiring Oregon's cities and counties to consider climate justice during their planning processes. When the land use system works as intended, it can be a powerful tool to make peoples' lives healthier while making our cities more sustainable. It has certainly shaped Oregon's cities and towns while preserving our great state's natural beauty over the past four decades. However, we want to share our concern that since 1973, the land use system has been weakened and today is less effective at creating climate-friendly and equitable communities.

Central Oregon LandWatch is intimately familiar with some of the land use system's weaknesses, which include the many exceptions to protections for rural lands and failure to provide adequate supplies of affordable housing inside Urban Growth Boundaries. Another weakness is its failure to address the systemic racism that was an integral part of this state's founding (see: exclusion laws). We support 1,000 Friends of Oregon's suggestion to incorporate



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racial justice and equity into land use planning across the entire land use system by revising Land Use Goal 1. In addition to Ms. McCurdy's recommendations, we recommend reviewing the language used to define the public because people should not be excluded from participating in the land use planning system based on citizen status.

As champions of Oregon's statewide land use system, we know it is incredibly important to our State's efforts to fight climate change, and we strongly support requiring environmental justice and climate adaptation to be major considerations when local governments plan for how to use Oregon's finite land as our population grows. HB 2488 will improve the land use system, and by continuing to adhere to its core tenets - protection of open spaces and working lands and planning for compact cities that provide housing and sustainable transportation for all people - we can bolster the aims of HB 2488 to require environmental justice and climate adaptation in land use planning.

Sincerely,

Moey Newbold  
Director of Urban Planning  
Central Oregon LandWatch



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