



1000 Friends of Oregon
340 SE 6th Ave, Portland, OR 97214
www.friends.org
503-497-1000

February 25, 2026

To: Sen. Khanh Pham, Chair, Sen. Dick Anderson, Vice Chair, and Members
Senate Committee on Housing and Development

From: Mary Kyle McCurdy, Associate Director and Jim Johnson, Working Lands Policy Director

Re: Opposition to -A12 amendment to HB 4037: Rezoning Rural Resource Lands for
Development

1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities, protect family farms, forests and natural areas, and provide transportation and housing choices. 1000 Friends opposes the -A12 amendment to HB 4037.

1000 Friends understands that Oregon's rural communities have serious housing needs, the solutions must be tailored to meet those needs, and those solutions will look different on the coast, in eastern Oregon, in southwest Oregon, and so on. That is why we have worked for years, at the legislature in rulemaking, and in communities across Oregon to bring options for more diverse and affordable housing, as well as the infrastructure funding that all Oregon's cities need to see housing actually develop. We also have a staff position dedicated to working with community groups and local leaders in small cities and towns on housing. While the -A12 amendment is not the answer, we look forward to continuing to work on solutions, with rural community leaders.

Briefly, the -A12 amendment does not provide the housing most needed, well-located near schools, stores, services, and jobs. HB 4037 -A12 authorizes rural Oregon counties to "rezone" up to 50-acres of resource lands for residential development at urban densities (at least 5 houses per acres), without consideration of:

- impacts to agriculture, ranching, or forestry in the area
- impacts on natural and cultural resources
- wildfire risk
- water availability, groundwater restrictions, or other water-related limits

Since our founding in 1974, we have worked with Oregonians to enhance our quality of life by building livable urban and rural communities, protecting family farms and forests, and conserving natural areas.

- impacts to fish and wildlife habitat and migration routes

These rezonings would result in islands of non-farm related housing, where residents will have to drive for jobs, groceries, school, etc... And while the limit on home size and on vacation rentals are good tools to make this housing less attractive to speculators, some of the developments could also be a multi-acre- high-end subdivisions of mostly second homes (as long as they are not rented out, there is nothing that prevents them from being second homes).

This type of rezoning would simply exacerbate the loss of Oregon's productive farm and forest lands to conversion to non-resource uses.¹ The American Farmland Trust estimates that roughly half of the farmland conversion in Oregon between 2001 and 2016 was due to low-density residential development. Locating more housing in and around farm and forest areas increases conflicts with common farming and forestry practices, increases traffic on farm roads, creates additional demand on limited water resources, and can increase wildfire risk.

Allowing more houses on agricultural and forest land also increases the cost of those lands, putting them out of the reach for the next generation of farmers and forest land managers. The mere opportunity for additional nonfarm residential development drives up land prices beyond what farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers can afford. See <https://capitalpress.com/2025/02/21/small-parcels-of-farmland-sell-for-more-even-in-oregon/>

Oregon's rural towns and cities need housing for local workers and to attract new jobs and support local businesses, and they need investment in infrastructure to support both jobs and housing. These are goals that we look forward to working towards with local leaders and community groups.

We urge you to not pass the -A12 amendment. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

¹ Between 1983 and 2021, more than 33,918 new houses were approved in Oregon's farm, forest, and mixed farm/forest zones—enough new houses for every household in Bend or Medford. DLCD 2020-2021 Farm and Forest Biennial Report to Legislature. On average, counties approve over 950 new houses in Oregon's farm, forest and mixed farm/forest zones each year. DLCD 2022-2023 Farm and Forest Biennial Report to Legislature, 45 and 69.