

Protecting Our Lands and Local Voice

Understanding the Impact of HB 4035A

While advertised as a solution to the housing crisis, HB 4035A contains provisions that could permanently alter our local landscapes, strain taxpayer resources, and bypass the voices of residents.

I. The Threat to Oregon's Heritage: Sprawl vs. Farmland

Oregon's legacy of protecting greenbelts is at risk. This bill makes it easier to expand Urban Growth Boundaries (UGBs) into areas previously reserved for agriculture and nature.

Loss of Finite Resources: Once high-quality farmland or forestland is paved over for residential use, it can never be recovered for food production or wildlife habitat.

Urban–Rural Conflict: Placing housing directly adjacent to active farms creates friction over noise, dust, and equipment use, often making it impossible for family farms to continue operations.

II. Financial Burdens on Local Taxpayers

Expanding "outward" instead of "inward" is a costly model for any community.

Infrastructure Costs: Building new roads, sewer lines, and water systems for fringe developments is significantly more expensive than "infill" (building within existing city limits).

The Sprawl Subsidy: In many cases, existing residents end up subsidizing the massive infrastructure costs required to support these new, distant developments.

III. Diluting the Promise of "Affordable Housing"

HB 4035A lowers the standards for who these developments are supposed to serve.

Targeting the Wrong Tier: By shifting focus from "severely cost-burdened" to simply "cost-burdened" households, the bill allows developers to prioritize market-rate housing over the deeply affordable units our lowest-income neighbors truly need.

The "One-Time" Loophole: Critics argue this creates a precedent that allows developers to bypass rigorous, evidence-based planning in favor of quick, high-profit expansions.

IV. Removing Your Right to a Say

Perhaps the most concerning aspect is the reduction of local democratic oversight.

Bypassing Public Votes: Legislative trends associated with this bill aim to categorize expansion decisions as "administrative." This makes it harder—or impossible—for local citizens to refer these massive growth decisions to a public ballot.

Centralized Decision Making: Power is shifted toward state-level mandates and away from the local planning commissions that understand the unique needs of our specific neighborhoods. Housing solutions should not come at the expense of our environment, our farmers, or our local voice.

