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February 15, 2021

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

Testimony: SB 391

Chair Jama, Vice Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a conservation organization which for more than 35 years has protected Central Oregon’s beautiful forests and high desert, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and our 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 391. Bill proposes allowing ADUs in rural residential zones.

Central Oregon LandWatch respectfully urges you to reject SB 391. Rural ADUs should remain as needed housing for farmworkers, and as accessories to historic houses.

This ill-considered expansion of rural ADUs beyond their important role for farmworker housing would double rural sprawl across Oregon.

With no redeeming purpose, SB 391 is a betrayal of the ideals of Governor Tom McCall. This bill threatens to negate his tireless work to protect the beauty and productivity of Oregon's rural lands. In 1973, Governor McCall addressed the Oregon legislature, saying:

“There is a shameless threat to our environment and to the whole quality of life, an unfettered despoiling of the land.”

“Sagebrush subdivisions, coastal ‘condomania,’ and the ravenous rampage of suburbia in the Willamette Valley all threaten to mock Oregon’s status as the environmental model for the Nation.”

SB 391's rural residential areas are the sagebrush subdivisions of Governor McCall's famous speech. They are the areas of unplanned rural sprawl that predated the land use planning laws. They are the unsightly, destructive development that Oregon's iconic land use planning system was enacted to prevent.



Protecting Central Oregon's Natural Environment And Working For Sustainable Communities

SB 391 turns the benefits of ADUs on their head.

Inside urban growth boundaries, ADUs prevent cities from having to sprawl beyond their boundaries to provide affordable housing. Inside urban growth boundaries, ADUs alleviate the need for costly new public infrastructure, preserve open space and natural resources, reduce traffic and congestion, and reduce our carbon footprint. Inside urban growth boundaries, ADUs are at the cutting edge of zoning best practices.

Outside urban growth boundaries, ADUs provide essential farmworker housing. Beyond that important function, they are simply sprawl. SB 391 would double the destructive footprint of every **sagebrush subdivision** in Oregon.

SB 391 does not alleviate the affordable housing crisis.

It is not the case that SB 391 will help address Oregon's affordable housing crisis, while rural ADUs can be used for vacation rentals. Vacation rentals are among the most significant factors displacing low income residents across Oregon and around the world. Central Oregon LandWatch is eager to work with the committee to help devise meaningful and effective solutions to Oregon's affordable housing crisis: this bill does nothing to advance that important goal.

In his 1973 address, Governor McCall continued:

"The interests of Oregon for today and in the future must be protected from the grasping wastrels of the land. We must respect another truism: That unlimited and unregulated growth leads inexorably to a lowered quality of life."

Today more than ever, Tom McCall's words ring true. SB 391 is tailor-made for *today's* grasping wastrels of the land; it will do nothing to alleviate the affordable housing crisis that is among the most pressing issues of our time. For the above reasons, and for the sake of the quality of life of all Oregonians, we respectfully urge you to vote no on SB 391.

Respectfully submitted,

Ben Gordon
Executive Director
Central Oregon LandWatch

