



Oregon Association of
Conservation Districts

February 12, 2019

Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
jwmnr.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

Re: HB 5027 funding for the Department of Land Conservation and Development

To Co-Chair Taylor, Co-Chair Reardon and members of the Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Anna Freitas, and I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express **support for HB 5027, and specifically POP 090 regarding sage grouse implementation**. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which implement and assist in voluntary conservation. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by working closely with private landowners as well as non-profit, federal, and state partners like the Department of Land Conservation and Development. DLCD is a particularly important partner in one of Oregon's distinguishing conservation efforts: the Greater Sage Grouse. Sage grouse conservation is achieved in large part through SageCon, a unique and exemplary partnership, in which SWCDs are key to implementation and DLCD's contracted SageCon coordinator is key to convening and harmonizing the partnership's work.

Contained in HB 5027 is \$500,000 for SageCon (POP 090), which is used to contract coordination services essential to the success of the partnership. OACD encourages the legislature to support Governor Brown's request for \$500,000 for SageCon coordination, and to **ensure those funds are spent efficiently** through a budget note to eliminate the overhead charged by Portland State University.

DLCD is just one of several agencies involved in SageCon, and each has a vital role in the partnership. SageCon has made significant progress since its inception. Approximately **200 landowners have enrolled in agreements focusing on sage grouse conservation**, working with Districts and other SageCon partners. As an example of one piece that Districts implement, in the 2015-2017 biennium Harney SWCD alone treated 7,000 acres of juniper and brush for sage grouse habitat restoration. The fight isn't over though. **Without**

continued coordination, fire protection, restoration, and monitoring, the state's prior investments in these efforts, the survival of the greater sage grouse, and the communities protecting the sage grouse could still be at risk. Oregon's SageCon leads the nation in effective, locally driven conservation that protects livelihoods while protecting natural resources, and strengthens community and resilience in the process. As some of OACD's partners have said, Oregon the best state to be working on natural resources and conservation because organizations and individuals come together to solve problems, rather than getting caught up on our differences. SageCon is a prime example of this culture.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 5027 and the importance of the Department of Land Conservation and Development's SageCon coordination. **We encourage you to support SageCon through DLCDC's budget, and through funding for fire protection, local implementation teams, and monitoring to ensure we maintain and build on the progress we've made.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Freitas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anna" and last name "Freitas" clearly distinguishable.

Anna H. Freitas
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