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Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Dembrow, Vice Chair Olsen, and Esteemed Members of the Committee,

I write you today on behalf of NeighborWorks Umpqua to express the organization’s support for the spirit of SB 1530, which seeks to modify statewide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals. These goals are only attainable if intentional, concerted effort is made to mitigating the unintended consequences that application of the bill will have in rural communities, the places which more than half of the state calls home.

NeighborWorks Umpqua is a rural-focused housing and community development corporation committed to promoting opportunity for all. Working primarily in the 5 counties of Southwestern Oregon (Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson & Josephine), NeighborWorks Umpqua knows that the State cannot and will not meet its climate pollution reduction goals on the backs of small, local, family-owned businesses, those specifically in timber, fisheries, and agriculture, which have and continue to be the lifeblood for rural communities.

During this time of reflection and research in our state’s search for a clean energy solution, our rural communities are on edge. Rural growth took a historic hit with the economic downturn in 2008. Our communities showed their characteristic resiliency and climbed out of the economic depression with hard work, local financial investments, and the help of advocates, like NeighborWorks Umpqua and other rural nonprofits. The heavy equipment that made the return to pre-2008 economic levels - the actual engines that drove our successful economic rise! - are the same engines keeping our neighbors and community members housed, fed and employed. It behooves any bill to ensure that rural employers/contractors are not left with the impossible task of wringing 1000-foot pounds of torque out of an electric or gas motor with only a minimal subsidy from the State.

Without direct, meaningful and intentional subsidy, coupled with a solid analysis of how to mitigate the impact climate bills like SB 1530 have on rural economies, we set all Oregon up for a Sisyphean task of reconciling a false dichotomy: protect the environment or protect my livelihood. NeighborWorks Umpqua supports a climate bill and any amendment that speaks to the reality faced by independent contractors and local businesses that are least able to buy themselves out from under more stringent emissions regulations.

Sincerely,

Arielle Reid
Director of Policy & Advocacy
NeighborWorks Umpqua



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