

February 12, 2020

Chair Senator Golden
Senate Committee on Wildfire Reduction and Recovery
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

***Re: SB 1536: Continued Support for Land Use Provisions in -1 Amendments;
Support for Defensible Space Provisions in -3 Amendments***

Dear Chair Golden and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed amendments to SB 1536. 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 choice. Our supporters come from across Oregon, from every county in the state.

1000 Friends of Oregon strongly supports the recommendations of the Governor's Wildfire Council. That final report explained that impacts of wildfire hit our vulnerable communities the hardest. The council explained:

“the bulk of long-term damage and human loss is borne by local communities where wildfire occurs. Further, these impacts are often most pronounced with vulnerable populations, including communities of color, the elderly and disabled, children, and renters lacking home insurance.” Wildfire Report at 7.

These impacts will not wait for work groups to convene and further study approaches. This legislature needs to take a step forward today in how we address wildfire.

-1 Amendments

We continue to support the governor's proposal provided in the -1 amendments that direct DLCD, in coordination with local governments, and in coordination with the State Fire Marshall and ODF, to develop statewide mapping of wildfire risk necessary to engage in meaningful rulemaking under Statewide Planning Goal 7 (Natural Hazards). And we support technical

assistance and funding to be provided to local governments to facilitate the implementation and maintenance of this meaningful wildfire hazard planning. We also support the provisions addressing defensible space.

-3 Amendments

We support the provisions in the -3 amendments that address defensible space. We support the development and maintenance of a comprehensive statewide map of wildfire risk that can be used for land use planning. Regardless of what agency develops and maintains the map, we need to move forward with establishment of a risk map that can be used at the parcel level. We support the establishment, application, and funding streams for this mapping program and those actions necessary to achieve implementation of minimum defensible space requirements in high hazard areas.

We are disappointed to see that the land use provisions have fallen away in the -3 amendments.

Conclusion

Our land use system is an effective and affordable tool to reduce risk of wildfire, and must be utilized to save lives and property. We acknowledge the alternative path that is developing in the house chamber on land use and wildfire. We continue to engage with stakeholders on the development of an interim work group to further refine the Wildfire Council’s land use recommendations to achieve planning that addresses regional differences.

However, we would like to remind all that the Wildfire Council’s land use recommendations were flagged as a **very high priority** and explicitly directed action:

- “• State agencies create a wildfire risk map informed by state information that can be used at the property ownership level.

- In coordination with cities and counties, the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) undertake rulemaking (under Goal 7) to adopt minimum standards for local governments to plan for wildfire risk.

- State agencies (DLCD, ODF, and OSFM) provide technical assistance resources to counties and cities to implement wildfire risk planning, zoning, or development of mitigation standards.” Wildfire Report at 22.



We encourage this committee to move a version of this bill that, at least, achieves the council’s first land use recommendation of directing state agencies to create a wildfire risk map that can be used at the property ownership level. With limited time and funding, risk map development should first address counties with high hazards. Based on the State’s Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan, the counties that are the most vulnerable to wildfire, and therefore should be prioritized, are Deschutes, Douglas, Grant, Jackson, Jefferson, Josephine, Klamath, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, and Wasco counties.

We continue to experience tragic fires across the West. Oregon must take courageous leadership, foster collaboration across the state to find meaningful solutions, and use the land use system to minimize the risk and impacts of wildfire.

Thank you,
Scott Hilgenberg
Rural Lands Legislative Attorney
1000 Friends of Oregon