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February 2, 2021

House Committee on Housing
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE, Room 453
Salem, Oregon 97301

Testimony: HB 2655

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Campos, Vice Chair Morgan, 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 HB 2655. Bill proposes decreasing minimum lot size for rural residential use.

Oregon’s statewide land use system protects rural lands from fragmentation and degradation. Large minimum lot sizes support sensitive wildlife populations and our billion-dollar agricultural and forest industries.

Current large minimum lot sizes in rural residential areas help protect wildlife including deer, elk, and pronghorn in rural areas, by providing buffers between dwellings to reduce stress as they move across the landscape. Greater rural housing density is directly associated with declines in wildlife populations from increased mortality due to degraded habitat, increased stress and disease transmission, and lethal wildlife management consequences of human activity.

LandWatch strongly opposes decreasing minimum lot sizes in rural residential areas. A one-acre minimum lot size will result in sprawling rural residential development that directly conflicts with neighboring farms and ranches. According to the American Farmland Trust, low-density residential development poses the greatest risk to Oregon's working farmlands.

We advocate a NO vote on HB 2655 to protect Oregon's wildlife, farms, and forests for future generations. Thank you for this opportunity to comment, and for your consideration of our position.

Respectfully,
Carol Macbeth
Staff Attorney

