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February 8, 2021

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

Testimony: HB 2708

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 2708. Bill proposes expanding UGBs outside normal expansion processes.

In 2016, the legislature passed HB 4079, allowing one city in the state to allow new housing outside of its urban growth boundary. That bill requires LCDC to report on the progress of the pilot program to the legislature. The housing authorized by HB 4079 has not been built, and no report has been made on its progress. LandWatch believes that good policy must be grounded in good data. It is premature to allow what was intended as a pilot program to proliferate across the state without taking the time to study HB 4079’s effectiveness in solving the problem it sought to address.

We are proponents of making housing more affordable in Oregon. Locating housing on the edges of cities, far away from urban services and established communities, is not the way to help Oregon’s neediest residents. Expanding urban growth boundaries should be based on need, which is what the existing UGB expansion process, updated by 2019’s HB 2003, requires. HB 2078 will needlessly expand urban growth boundaries onto rural resource lands with sprawling housing – most of which (70%) will not be affordable. Please do not pass HB 2708.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment and for your consideration of our position.

Respectfully,

Rory Isbell
Staff Attorney
Central Oregon LandWatch



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