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DATE: May 5, 2021
TO: House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources
RE: SB 605, relating to annexing territory to rural fire protection districts

Dear Chair Hudson, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and Members of the Committee:

Lane County is opposed to SB 605, and we ask that the Committee take no further action on this measure. If this measure were to become law, the Board of County Commissioners would find itself without any discretion over future decisions related to annexations into rural fire districts. County residents rely on their Commissioners to make decisions in a public setting and expect to be able to participate with County government to have their voice heard on any given issue. This bill mandates a prescribed outcome and we believe it is an un-necessary bill.

We understand there are a variety of options and influences that already exist for the annexation described by this measure:

- Many insurers and mortgage companies require proof of fire protection before providing coverage or the lending of money. This dynamic serves as a built in incentive for residents that may reside outside of an existing district boundary to get inside that boundary.
- Some fire districts offer residents a privately negotiated contract to receive fire protection outside of an existing boundary. These arrangements are often faster and cheaper than formal annexations.
- A fire district may place an annexation question before the voters of its district through a public process that occurs regularly and while certain timelines for elections do exist, County Clerks regularly help taxing districts through the advance procedures necessary to place a question onto a local ballot.
- Wildfire awareness is certainly growing, and the Lane County Board of Commissioners is keenly interested in steps it can take to enhance prevention. Local fire districts in Lane County have not expressed any advocacy for SB 605A.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our testimony in opposition to SB 605A.