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May 9, 2021

Chair Nancy Nathanson
House Committee on Revenue
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 3160

Dear Chair Nathanson and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 3160. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 40 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice. Statewide land use planning Goal 7 is “Areas Subject to Natural Hazards.” Goal 7’s objective is “to protect people and property from natural hazards” by reducing risk from natural hazards, including wildfires, through land use planning, coordination, and education.

The 2020 wildfire season, while the largest and most damaging to lives, homes, businesses, watersheds, and infrastructure Oregon has seen, is unlikely to be an anomaly. In fact, April 2021 was the driest April on record in Oregon, and wildfires, evacuations, and burn bans have already occurred. Oregon must invest now in critical, coordinated community-based programs to reduce wildfire risk and build community resiliency. HB 3160 does this. We call out, in particular, several programs proposed to be funded by HB 3160:

- Directs the State Fire Marshal to assist communities in developing and implementing community wildfire protection plans based on national best practices standards.
- Directs the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board to fund recovery and resiliency activities, including reforestation, watershed rehabilitation, drinking water protection, slope stabilization, and erosion control in areas that have been subjected to wildfires.

Oregon needs a stable, ongoing funding source to carry out these programs. These needs are not one time only projects; rather, they must be implemented and maintained on an ongoing basis to be effective.

The proposed funding source in the -2 amendment to SB 3160 – a scaled surcharge on all property insurance - has a direct nexus to what the funds are being used for: to reduce risk to property, as well as people. The fee is relatively modest, spread across many payers.

Oregonians are looking to the legislature to take steps now – before the next wildfire season – to protect communities, drinking water sources, infrastructure, and homes. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director

