

Submitter: Randy Tucker

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1051

Please reject the -2 amendment (or any similar amendment) to Senate Bill 1051, which would fundamentally undermine the process for managing urban growth in the Portland area by essentially taking it away from public officials who are accountable to their constituents and handing it over to private landowners. This was a terrible idea when it was introduced in the 2021 session as House Bill 3072, and it has only gotten worse in this latest incarnation. It frankly looks like an attempt by interests who have long opposed urban growth boundaries to exploit an affordable housing crisis for their own economic gain.

The current process for managing the urban growth boundary works. In the Portland area, Metro is already required to provide enough land for all uses every six years, and cities can also request UGB expansions for needed housing midway through that six-year cycle. The key factors are a) that the UGB is only expanded if a need for land can be demonstrated, and b) the UGB is only expanded if a city requests the expansion and develops a plan, including how it will finance and build the infrastructure to support development. These principles provide a balance between the protection of farm and forest land outside the UGB and the need for housing in our communities. They also guarantee that land brought into the boundary will actually provide housing and services. But SB 1051 abandons these key principles of orderly development in favor of a process driven not by public officials, but by the desire of landowners to develop their land, irrespective of whether the land is needed or the proposed use has local support.

SB 1051 purports to address a need for “workforce housing” and “workforce commercial.” However, “workforce housing” is defined to include housing affordable to people with above-average incomes, and “workforce commercial” is essentially undefined beyond a limit on building size. In addition to these gaping loopholes, the bill only requires that 20% of the land in question even be dedicated to “workforce housing” and/or “workforce commercial.” Frankly, this bill is a land grab hiding behind a real need for affordable housing, which is already being addressed in many more responsible and realistic ways.

SB 1051 would use a false promise of affordable housing to gut key protections for our communities. Please do not move it forward.