



March 27, 2023

House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 3317 – Oppose Unless Amended

Chair Bynum, Vice-Chair Morgan, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3317. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a conservation organization that, for more than 35 years, has protected Central Oregon’s forests and high desert, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and its 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.

While LandWatch's geographic scope is Central Oregon, we engage in matters outside of our geography when they are of statewide significance and pertain to upholding Oregon’s statewide land use planning system. In the case of HB 3317, our recommended amendments are requested because without them the bill undermines Oregon land use planning.

We support most of HB 3317, which would establish a Board to formulate and implement strategies and practices for strategic investment in workforce housing, workforce development and economic development in Wallowa Rural and Recreational Economic Development Region.

However, we have strong objections to Sections 9 and 10 of the bill and must unfortunately oppose HB 3317 unless amended to remove Sections 9 and 10. These provisions of the bill would allow Wallowa County to rezone 50 acres of farmland, outside of urban growth boundaries, for residential development and exempt that rezoning from compliance with Oregon land use planning law. We recognize the statewide need to produce more housing options for Oregonians, including in Wallowa County, but housing should be developed inside urban growth boundaries. Developing housing on vacant land outside of cities is the most expensive type of new development, because the costs of transportation, sewer, water and other infrastructure are tremendous. If a city has inadequate land for new development inside its urban growth boundary, then it can and should expand its urban growth boundary, prioritizing nonresource lands (not farmland) first. Since 2016, 37 cities in Oregon expanded their urban growth boundaries.¹ Only two of those expansions were unsuccessful, and neither

¹ https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/UP/Documents/UGB_Amendments_2016-2021.pdf





2843 NW Lolo Drive, Ste. 200 | Bend, OR 97703

Phone (541) 647-2930

www.colw.org

of those two cities sought additional lands for residential development. The current process for ensuring adequate lands for residential development works.

The legislature is currently working on legislation to implement the Oregon Housing Needs Assessment and streamline and accelerate the planning and production of housing, and those bills have broad, consensus-based support. Sections 9 and 10 of HB 3317 are controversial, will result in conflicts with farming operations, and will burden cities with expensive public infrastructure liabilities. We request these sections of the bill be removed; in which case this bill will earn our support.

In addition to the above concerns, we also suggest amending Section 2, (2)(a) of the bill to add a seat representing environmental conservation on the Wallowa Rural and Recreational Economic Development Board. With Wallowa County's natural resource and tourism-based economy, responding to environmental conservation considerations will make the new Board more comprehensive and responsive to community concerns.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Regards,

Rory Isbell
Rural Lands Program Manager & Staff Attorney
Central Oregon LandWatch



WE DEFEND AND PLAN FOR CENTRAL OREGON'S LIVABLE FUTURE