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February 7, 2025

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Oppose HB 2422

To Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Andersen, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness

Friends of Marion County is an independent 501(c)(3) farmland protection organization founded in 1998. Our mission is to protect farm and forestland, parks, and open space in Marion County.

We oppose the adoption of HB 2422 and we request that the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness reject this bill which will negatively affect the agricultural, forested, and public lands that sustain our communities. This bill disregards existing laws, especially our land use laws that encourage smart growth and the protection of agricultural and forest lands that Oregonians rely on for food, fiber, and jobs.

PROBLEM

HB 2422 would attempt to create sprawl from the outside in by allowing counties to bypass land use laws to more than double the density of certain rural lands.

HB 2422 overrides existing state policy that requires a planning process to increase dwelling densities on thousands of acres of rural land. The bill would authorize counties to more than double the dwelling density on rural lands where it is currently limited to one house per 2.5 acres, increasing it to one house per 1 acre without taking an exception to Goal 14 – as is required under existing law.

A planned approach to increasing residential densities requires counties to consider:

- Whether the increased rural development will be more difficult and costly to serve;
- Whether there is sufficient infrastructure in place to serve more than twice as many new homes;
- The transportation implications of doubling the amount of houses in rural areas;

February 7, 2025

Page | 2

- Whether the increased development will negatively impact surrounding agricultural and forestry operations;
- Whether the increased density would make future urban growth boundary expansions more difficult and costly, if not impossible.

This bill bypasses the benefits of requiring counties to plan for additional rural development through the exceptions process, or through the Big Look provisions of ORS 215.788.-794, both of which ensure any increased densities will not have unintended negative consequences on Oregon's precious resources. These planning processes also ensure an equal playing field where everyone, not just well-financed individual landowners, have access to the planning process.

CONCLUSION

The time is right for the legislature to pay serious attention to Oregon's farm, range, and forest land and the many resources those lands protect. Please stop the land speculation and conversion of Oregon's limited and precious agricultural and forest land resulting from unintended loopholes in existing land use statutes.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

Roger Kaye, Pres.
Friends of Marion County
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