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February 10, 2025

House Committee on Housing & Homelessness

Re: HB 2400 - OPPOSE

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Anderson, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and Committee Members:

Friends of the Columbia Gorge ("Friends") is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area.

HB 2400 threatens Oregon's agricultural and forest lands by permitting an extra house on rural properties. This bill does not provide safeguards to protect the vital, significant, and sacred places that sustain our communities throughout the state.

Landowners who wish to add a home on their property have various options available to them currently—six different methods on forest land and seven on farmland. Additionally, Oregon law permits the construction of new homes for relatives and non-relatives of agricultural and forest land managers.

While the initial process allows for an additional dwelling to be occupied by a relative, once the application is approved, the family member can move out at any time. Afterward, the owner can lease the house to anyone for 18 months. Following that period, the owner is allowed to sell the house to anyone. There is no requirement that the home remain occupied by a family member.

It's crucial that we protect our farm and forest lands. Allowing this will drive up land costs, creating barriers for future farmers and forest land managers to purchase land. It will also increase traffic on already strained rural roads, heighten wildfire risks, put additional pressure on water resources, and negatively impact local forests, wildlife, and farm animals.

We strongly urge the committee to oppose HB 2400, as it would result in significant and harmful consequences for Oregon's rural farm and forest lands.

Sincerely,
Sofia Urrutia-Lopez
Conservation Organizer