SAVE HELVETIA
13260 NW Bishop Rd
Hillsboro, OR 97124
February 10, 2025

House Committee on Housing and Homelessness
Oregon Legislative Assembly

Opposition to HB 2316

Save Helvetia is a private, non-profit, advocacy organization that has been active over 15 years to protect farm and forestlands in Washington County. We organized in 2010 during the Urban and Rural Reserves planning process, studying lands in and around the Helvetia area, submitting testimonies to Washington County, Metro, and LCDC. We then became appellants to the Oregon State Court of Appeals, prevailing in our citizen science assertions that the county and Metro had misapplied the law and administrative rules in selecting urban and rural reserves. The court's ruling invalidated the proposed reserves and the negotiated result became the Grand Bargain legislation (HB 4078) of 2014. This was unanimously endorsed by both houses of the legislature and signed into law by then Governor Kitzhaber. We have since become an affiliate of 1000 Friends of Oregon, monitoring and defending land use laws and principles in Washington County.

We oppose House Bill 2316
This bill seeks to aid our housing crisis, a commendable goal. But the bill fails in several important ways, including disrespect for our land use laws, an apparent misunderstanding of who needs housing, where it's needed, and inadequate assessment of the financial impact.

Allowing access to unused state-owned lands for low and middle income housing would override state land use processes. Are you dismantling Oregon land use here? For what purpose? Because HB 4078 in 2014 awarded so much land inside urban growth boundaries in Washington County and the City of Hillsboro, they do not yet have the legal standing to conduct further land use planning outside of the existing urban growth boundary. If HB 2316 seeks to change this, it does not say so. The first goal of land use law is community participation. We are a community based organization with a history of effective participation. We have successfully exercised our right under state land use laws to testify and to appeal as we found government-based processes had manipulated state law and administrative rules. Taking these community participation "rights" away from the beginning causes us dismay, worry, and wonder.

Creating housing is costly, which presents another point of failure for this bill. The State of Oregon taxpayers would be saddled with unvetted expenses for site development and readiness. Bringing infrastructure to such settings could be unreasonably costly. If parcels cannot tie-in to pre-existing urban water and sewer, for example, well-drilling and septic development would need to occur. System development costs would be the responsibility of the

State and subsequently the state taxpayers. Many have already supported efforts to create more affordable housing, but if this entangles a mega tax bill, should it not be put to a vote of the people? A careful study of costs would need to occur to put this burden before the voters.

In general, single family dwellings are more expensive to build and develop than other housing types. We can't discern from the bill any justification for this level of discrimination among housing types, nor does it serve the market. Why does the bill not strive for housing to meet the segment with the greatest need? Studies show clearly that now, and as forecast for the future, smaller, less costly homes are and will be in demand for smaller families, and for an aging population. More effort should be directed to lands within the UGBs for development of affordable housing, with incentives that help solve the current tight financing issues. State subsidies and lottery systems might benefit them in central areas that are already served by urban infrastructure, creating a level playing field for access to state-supported affordable housing.

Respectfully,

Robert Bailey, Secretary
Faun Hosey, pres@savehelvetia.org for **Save Helvetia**

Advancing policies, leaders and actions that protect Helvetia's treasured resources.