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**February 12, 2025**

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Senate Committee on Rules  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**Subject: Testimony in Support of SB 547 – Native Plant Appreciation Month**

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

On behalf of Willamette Riverkeeper, we are writing to express our strong support for SB 547 which would make the month of April “Native Plant Appreciation Month.” SB 547 would help bring awareness to the importance of native plants and encourage the public to become educated in the many benefits of native plants in habitat restoration and in home gardens.

Willamette Riverkeeper restores habitats by removing invasive plants and reintroducing a diverse range of native species, including culturally significant plants like Wapato. Wapato has long been an essential part of Oregon’s Indigenous cultures, serving as both a food source and a vital trade item for numerous tribes. Recognizing its importance, Willamette Riverkeeper has partnered with the Grand Ronde Tribe on the Wapato Revival Project to help this species thrive once again in local waterways.

Native plants play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance, particularly in riparian zones, where they help control erosion, protect water quality, and regulate water temperatures. Their deep root systems stabilize stream banks, reducing erosion and preventing sediment from entering waterways. This natural filtration improves water quality by trapping pollutants before they reach streams. Additionally, the shade provided by native riparian vegetation helps lower water temperatures, which is essential for the survival of many aquatic species, including salmon and other cold-water fish.

In the context of climate change, native plants also play a vital role in wildfire mitigation. They are generally more fire-resistant due to their higher moisture content and natural growth patterns. In contrast, invasive species, particularly some grasses, can increase wildfire frequency and intensity. For

example, in the Willamette Valley, invasive species like false brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) create dense, dry fuel beds that promote the rapid spread of wildfires. Managing these invasive species and restoring native vegetation can significantly reduce fire hazards while enhancing ecosystem resilience.

Beyond these ecological benefits, native plants contribute to Oregon's economy and enrich its natural landscapes. By providing food, shelter, and nesting sites, they support native wildlife, particularly pollinators that have evolved alongside them. In contrast, non-native plants often outcompete native species, leading to significant biodiversity loss. Restoring native vegetation strengthens ecosystems, ensuring long-term environmental resilience while addressing both water and wildfire challenges in a changing climate.

The importance of native plants cannot be overstated. SB 547 brings much needed awareness to the need for native plants. This bill will encourage communities to focus on planting native plants and removing non-native plants to restore our local ecosystems.

Oregon is already invested in bringing back native plants and helping restore habitat. By passing SB 547, Oregon can take another step in habitat restoration and conservation by bringing the public's awareness to the need for native plants.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

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