



February 13, 2025

House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2950, which proposes significant changes to Oregon's statewide land use planning goal on citizen involvement. While public participation is a critical part of the land use process, we are deeply concerned that this bill would increase state control at the expense of local decision-making, placing additional regulatory and procedural burdens on natural resource-based industries, rural communities, and private property owners.

Oregon's land use system has long relied on a balance between state policy and local implementation. However, HB 2950 would expand state oversight by requiring all local jurisdictions to revise land use plans and zoning ordinances based on a state-defined standard for citizen involvement. This one-size-fits-all shift weakens local control over land use decisions, limiting the ability of rural communities to address their unique economic and environmental challenges. It also increases regulatory uncertainty for property owners and businesses, as they may face additional procedural hurdles without clear local pathways for resolution. Furthermore, by encouraging third-party intervention in land use decisions, HB 2950 could give non-local or ideologically driven groups undue influence over policies that directly impact farms, forests, and resource-dependent industries.

While inclusive land use planning is important, HB 2950 creates an advisory structure and procedural mandates that could significantly slow down permitting and zoning decisions, delaying necessary land use approvals for agriculture, forestry, mining, and rural housing. The broad "public engagement" requirements in the bill could also lead to a more

politicized land use process, as vague mandates may be leveraged to stall lawful economic activities. Additionally, the likelihood of costly appeals and litigation would most certainly increase, particularly for long-standing natural resource operations that may face opposition from groups unfamiliar with working lands.

HB 2950 directs agencies and advisory committees to consider racial justice, environmental justice, and climate justice in updating the citizen involvement goal. While ensuring fairness in public participation is important, the bill does not define how these terms will be applied. This raises concerns that new permitting and review requirements could be introduced, adding costs and uncertainty for landowners. It also creates the potential for legally protected farming, ranching, and forestry practices to be challenged under vague new standards, leading to restrictions on resource management. Without a clear framework, regulatory burdens could increase without consideration of economic viability, particularly for small family farms, timber operations, and other industries essential to rural Oregon.

Natural resource industries are foundational to Oregon's rural economy. If HB 2950 results in greater procedural complexity and outside interference in land use decisions, rural communities could face reduced housing and infrastructure development, making it harder to sustain local populations. Land use policies that prioritize urban or ideological interests over rural economic realities could limit opportunities for job creation and sustainable resource management.

Rather than imposing top-down mandates, we encourage policymakers to preserve local authority in land use decision-making to ensure that statewide policies do not override the needs of rural communities. Citizen involvement processes should be transparent and accessible without creating unnecessary barriers for property owners and businesses. Any advisory or decision-making bodies should include direct representation from natural resource industries to ensure that the perspectives of agriculture, forestry, and other rural stakeholders are considered in shaping land use policies.

For these reasons, we strongly oppose HB 2950. This legislation threatens local governance, imposes unnecessary regulatory burdens, and creates additional uncertainty for Oregon's natural resource industries. While meaningful citizen involvement in land use decisions is important, it must not come at the cost of economic sustainability and the viability of working lands. We urge the Committee to reject HB 2950 and instead pursue policies that support both public engagement and the long-term success of Oregon's rural communities. In the event that the proposed legislation moves forward, we would request the opportunity to have a meaningful discussion to seek a remedy for our concerns.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Oregon Farm Bureau
Associated Oregon Loggers
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers
Oregon Seed Council