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OREGONIANS FOR FOOD & SHELTER

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A non-profit coalition to promote the efficient production of quality food and fiber while protecting human health, personal property and the environment, through the integrated, responsible use of pest management products, soil nutrients and biotechnology.

March 26, 2025

Senate Committee on Rules
Re: Opposition to SJR 28

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on SJR 28. Oregonians for Food & Shelter (OFS) is a diverse coalition with members across Oregon's natural resource sector, including many of Oregon's agricultural commodity groups and the forest products industry, as well as manufacturers of the modern tools and technologies producers use to grow food and fiber. OFS advocates for science-based policy, innovation, and stewardship related to these tools.

OFS opposes SJR 28, which proposes amending the Oregon constitution to establish rights for the environment. While we support the premise that all people have a right to a clean, safe, and healthy environment, we disagree that a constitutional amendment such as this one is needed, or would be effective, at ensuring and enforcing that right.

There are several issues with this concept, including the redundancy it has with existing laws and regulations. Oregon has an extensive system of regulations, spanning multiple state agencies and programs, designed to ensure a clean, safe, and healthy environment – this system is among the most stringent of any U.S. state. Oregon also has a clear system of enforcement when these stringent regulations are not followed.

Amending the Oregon constitution with the language in SJR 28 to establish environmental rights is not only redundant with existing protections, but it also poses significant interpretation and enforcement challenges due to its characteristically vague and subjective language, which could even lead to conflict between existing laws and/or goals intended to protect the environment, depending on the complainant and/or the subjective interpretation of a single judge.

Oregon's state agencies and citizens need clarity, precision, and predictability when navigating regulatory programs and potential projects. This is why Oregon's system of regulation and protection is based instead on clear and measurable standards rather than vague terms that will lead to uncertainty for business and interminable legal interpretations from judges.

This amendment would not have a measurable impact on the environment, but would instead lead to excessive litigation, and a shifting of power and authority over Oregon's laws and regulations from elected officials and accountable state agencies to unelected judges. Litigation should not replace our robust system of clear and



measurable laws and regulations, which are designed to protect the environment, human health, and vulnerable populations, while also recognizing the need for healthy economies and a thriving business sector. In practice, this often involves trade-offs, and decision-making which takes multiple perspectives and needs into account.

With “state action” (i.e. state government) as the litigation target, this bill could have a sizeable impact on Oregon’s budget, with taxpayer dollars being used to litigate frivolous cases brought by environmental and community groups who simply want to challenge projects and programs with which they disagree.

This misguided concept would inevitably lead to confusion and uncertainty for Oregon’s business community and economy, and it would hinder economic growth and innovation. We urge your no vote on SJR 28.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Murray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Katie" and last name "Murray" clearly distinguishable.

Katie Murray
Executive Director