



March 31, 2025

House Committee on Housing & Homelessness

Re: HB 3928 – 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.

Friends opposes HB 3928 which would allow counties to designate land for rural housing development outside of Urban Growth Boundaries, including land which is zoned for farm and forest use. Among the many issues with this bill, it would exempt these new developments from Oregon’s existing land use laws and the repayment of property taxes, thus incentivizing these poorly located developments to occur.

Lands outside of Urban Growth Boundaries are a poor location for new housing developments. Lands within UGBs are much better suited for developing new housing, as they are in much closer proximity to public transportation, employment opportunities, medical care, schools, grocery stores, and social services. Development outside of UGBs is costly and would place a significant burden on the taxpayers due to the new public infrastructure that would need to be created to support these housing developments. Allowing these types of developments to be built outside of UGBs will lead to urban sprawl causing a loss of open space, habitat degradation, and negative impacts on our state’s natural resources.

It’s crucial that we protect our rural farm and forest lands. Allowing counties to rezone land for rural housing developments will drive up rural 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.

A key issue with this bill is that these newly constructed rural housing developments would not be subject to statewide land use planning goals, comprehensive plans, rules adopted by the Land

Conservation and Development Commission, or other local government land use regulations. Additionally, this bill would allow these housing developments to circumvent the Land Use Board of Appeals, thus allowing counties to make poor zoning decisions with no oversight.

Finally, the provision of this bill which exempts these rural housing developments from the additional taxes they would be subject to due to the disqualification from a special assessment creates an incentive for this land to be converted for rural housing whether there is a true need for it or not.

Please oppose HB 3928 and protect Oregon's rural land from unnecessary and poorly zoned development.

Sincerely,
Madison Kenney
Conservation Organizer