

April 8, 2025

House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Central Oregon LandWatch Testimony on HB 3944 - Oppose

Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bill 3944. Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a nonprofit based in Bend with over 950 members located throughout the region. LandWatch’s mission is to defend and plan for Central Oregon’s livable future—which includes living with fire—and it has advocated on behalf of protecting the land use system and natural resources in Central Oregon for over 35 years.

LandWatch opposes HB 3944, which would repeal Oregon's statewide wildfire hazard map without proposing any alternatives to systematically improve wildfire resilience for homes and infrastructure.

Following the 2020 Labor Day Fires, which burned part of Jefferson County and shrouded Central Oregon in harmful smoke for weeks, SB 762 instigated a collaborative, science-backed process to develop a statewide wildfire hazard map and associated defensible space and home hardening requirements. While we recognize that the map and its roll-out were imperfect, we continue to believe in the underlying need for a standardized approach to community wildfire preparedness.

Repealing the map and code requirements will not make Oregonians safer, will not reduce insurance premiums, and will not help communities prepare for the increasing intensity, size, and frequency of wildfires and urban conflagrations. In short, this bill cannot and will not repeal reality. Homeowners across the state remain at substantial risk regardless of the map itself, and it is incumbent upon the Legislature to find a workable solution that meaningfully protects people in both urban and rural parts of the state.

The wildfire hazard map itself may not capture every individual property perfectly—no map or program could possibly do that. However, some level of mapping is critical to understand the extent and distribution of wildfire risk, and to devise incentive structures that move us toward greater wildfire resilience and collective safety.

We respectfully urge this committee to not pass HB 3944. Thank you for considering these comments.



We defend and plan for Central Oregon's livable future



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Sincerely,

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