

April 7, 2025

Chair Lively and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding HB 3794. I would also like to thank Representative Finger-McDonald and Senator Gelser Blouin, among others, for sponsoring this bill. As one of their constituents, I am grateful for their attention to this important issue.

A long-term solid waste reduction and management plan for the Willamette Valley is clearly needed. However, I am concerned that the proposed Task Force structure and study goals contained in HB 3794 are destined to recommend the continued reliance on an ever-expanding landfill at Coffin Butte, north of Corvallis.

This accidental landfill, which began operating in the 1940s, is located in the wet western Oregon environment, and receiving nearly 1/3 of all the garbage generated in the entire state of Oregon. This operation is causing irreparable damage to Oregon's air and water quality. Currently dumping trash in a former quarry, the existing landfill has the capacity to receive waste until 2037 at the current pace of dumping. This landfill must be designated for closure soon to limit its environmental impact.

We have an opportunity now to take the time and steps necessary to reduce trash generation, to implement sustainable practices, and to designate alternative, environmentally sensitive locations for the waste that is currently being dumped outside of Corvallis. For that to occur, the makeup of the proposed Task Force must be changed to include members dedicated to developing and implementing thoughtful alternatives to landfilling that reduce or eliminate the short and long-term impacts of this harmful practice.

As proposed, the makeup of the Task Force will likely be dominated by trash industry insiders focused on corporate profits and disregard for environmental impacts, residents' health, local housing and livability concerns. Packing tens of millions of tons of solid waste into an urbanizing area is a mistake. It might be cheaper for some in the short run, and highly profitable for the corporate operation, but in the long run it will be a costly disaster for the residents of Benton County.

HB 3794 also recommends the Task Force examine and possibly adopt the findings of a Benton County driven materials management plan. That plan is being developed now without resident input and is devoid of any consideration of alternative processing and disposal options, other than Coffin Butte landfill. It is also a duplication of work previously

completed by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Benton County is focused on an ever-expanding Coffin Butte landfill to retain and increase the annual franchise fee revenues to the County, without regard to the short and long-term environmental damages inflicted on the region.

A carefully crafted, long-term solid waste management plan that examines alternatives to continued landfilling in western Oregon is needed now. Creative solutions and a paradigm shift in our approach to waste reduction and disposal management are what is needed. Appointing people with a vested interest in the same old solutions to this proposed Task Force would be a mistake.

Sincerely,

Mark Yeager