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House Committee on Energy Environment and Water
 State Capitol
 900 Court Street NE
 Salem, OR 97301

February 14, 2012

MEASURE: HB 4078
 EXHIBIT: 21
 2012 SESSION H ENERGY, ENV. & WATER
 DATE: 2-14-12 PAGES: 1
 SUBMITTED BY: Steve McCoy

Re: HB 4078 – Utility Scale Solar on Exclusive Farm Use Land

Dear Co-Chair Bailey, Co-Chair Gilliam and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on HB 4078, which changes the standards associated with siting utility scale solar facilities on exclusive farm use (EFU) lands and diminishes the Energy Facility Siting Council’s jurisdiction over such facilities. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities, protect family farms and forests, and provide transportation and housing choice.

We recognize the importance of renewable energy both to meet Oregon’s energy needs and to help mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. We have been supportive of the wind power industry, in part, because it can provide farmers and ranchers an extra source of income while at the same time allowing them to continue common agriculture practices under the wind turbines. Solar photovoltaic installations, however, cover over the land and remove it from farm use. For this reason, **it is important to strike the proper balance of the size and location of solar installations on exclusive farm use land.**

Agriculture is Oregon's second largest industry: 1 out of 8 jobs in this state is agriculture-related, and the industry is directly and indirectly linked to about \$22 billion in sales of goods and services, accounting for 15% of the statewide total of sales involving all industry sectors. Agriculture is traded-sector – 40% is exported out of the country, bringing new dollars into the state. And those figures have been increasing almost steadily for two decades, which is not a story any other industry can tell.

Covering over productive farm land with solar panels takes the land out of productions and costs us jobs in agriculture. We should not trade solar jobs for agriculture jobs when we can have both. The rule that recently came out of LCDC’s solar rulemaking strikes a balance – it is easier to site larger solar arrays on less productive soils. This will direct solar development away from better farmlands and allow jobs in agriculture to continue while at the same time allowing solar development. **Under the very recently adopted rule, if arrays get very large, then some extra process is required at the county level or through the Energy Facility Siting Council to ensure proper siting, however there is no cap on size in the rules. We support administratively tweaking the rulemaking so that the threshold for more process on non-arable lands is 250 acres instead of 100 acres.** This will allow larger installations under the default process and will still allow solar developers to take advantage of economies of scale.

For the reasons discussed above **we ask you allow the agency to raise the acreage threshold on non-arable lands and then give the new rules some time to work rather than upsetting the balance struck by those rules before they have even been tested.**

Respectfully submitted,

Steve McCoy
 Farm and Forest Staff Attorney