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June 4, 2013

To: Senate Rules Committee
State Capitol, 900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 300 – Oppose

Dear Chair Rosenbaum and Committee Members:

Thank you for this opportunity to present testimony on SB 300. We understand the Committee will be considering the -3 amendments, and so we address our comments to those. 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. 1000 Friends does not support the original SB 300 or as it is proposed to be amended with the -3 amendments.

SB 300, as proposed to be amended, gives the Governor of Oregon the power to remove, without cause, members of the boards and commissions of a long list of state agencies, and other boards and commissions, including the Land Conservation and Development Commission and other natural resource boards and commissions.¹ The bill also gives the Governor the power to remove, without cause, the directors of a long list of state agencies, including the Department of Land Conservation and Development and other natural resource agencies.

Oregon has a long tradition of citizen oversight of state agencies through independent boards and commissions. This is to ensure, in part, that agencies remember that their client is the public – not the political party in power at the moment. Nor should boards and commissions be unduly susceptible to the “issue” of the moment; rather, we look to them to maintain a long-term perspective. The laws implemented, regulations adopted, and other actions taken by boards and commissions will, in most cases, be in place much longer than any office holder or board or commission member. The current arrangement for appointments to most boards and commissions – in which the Governor nominates and the Senate confirms – provides an appropriate check and balance to maintain independence. SB 300, including the proposed amendments, unnecessarily politicizes Oregon’s now-independent boards and commissions.

It is important to remember what this bill is *not* about – it is not about giving power to the Governor to consolidate or eliminate boards, commissions, or agencies in order to achieve efficiencies. We believe that is a very worthwhile topic to pursue, but this bill does not appear to address that.

Thank you for consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy".

¹ See, for example, the -3 amendments, Section 3, p. 3, lines 10-12, in which the current language stating that an LCDC member can be removed only for “cause” is proposed to be changed to the LCDC members serve “at the pleasure of the Governor.”

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Policy Director