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March 4, 2011

RE: Senate Bill 248, public hearing before Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Dear Chairwoman Dingfelder and Members of the Committee:

For at least the past five to seven years, Lane County has been in a forced transformation due to drastic declines in federal timber related revenues. Lane County faces its largest budget challenges in 40 years. Year after year of major reductions followed by modest restorations have kept the County focused inward and on the immediate. In early 2011, the Board of Commissioners and County Administrator set about shifting their perspective outward and toward the future by writing and adopting a focused, five year Strategic Plan. The goals of the strategic plan focus on three main areas: Public Safety, Public Health, and Economic Development.

The Board was unanimous in its selection of two goals in the area of economic development. The first, which has already been achieved, was to develop a revolving loan fund to promote rural business expansion, workforce development, and job creation and retention. The second is to transform the existing industrial land in Goshen to support increased levels of development resulting in jobs that pay no less than 150% of the median wage.

Lack of buildable land is a barrier for traded-sector companies that want to locate in Lane County. Both Eugene and Springfield have industrial sites, but not of the size available in Goshen. Economic development to the south of the I-5 Eugene/Springfield metropolitan area has not kept pace with the development of industrial lands to the north of the I-5 Eugene/Springfield metropolitan area. The Goshen development project provides the opportunity to attract companies that want to locate in Lane County and contribute to the economic development of our area.

Due to the size of the investment necessary to transform the existing industrial land in Goshen, it will likely require matching federal funds. SB 248 provides Lane County the means to raise the necessary funds for development projects requiring matching funds. The Goshen economic development project is an area in which Lane County can provide leadership and have a direct impact on preserving and increasing family wage jobs.

SB 248 will give Lane County a tool which it will use wisely. The dash-1 amendment has narrowed the bill, and provided sidebars to protect solid waste rates from any permanent increase. I ask that you schedule this bill for a work session, and move it to the floor of the House with a DO PASS recommendation.