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Springfield, OR 97478  
January 29, 2016

Senator Sara Gelsler, Chair, [Sen.SaraGelsler@state.or.us](mailto:Sen.SaraGelsler@state.or.us)  
Committee on Human Services & Early Childhood  
Cheyenne Ross, Committee Administrator [cheyenne.ross@state.or.us](mailto:cheyenne.ross@state.or.us)  
Senate President Peter Courtney, [Sen.PeterCourtney@state.or.us](mailto:Sen.PeterCourtney@state.or.us)

RE: SB 1575

Senator Gelsler and Committee Members,

My name is George Grier. I live at 1342 ½ 66<sup>th</sup> Street in Springfield. Housing for Oregonians should be a critical issue for all us because it impacts our economy and our society. It is important to have a thoughtful and timely dialogue about affordable housing in particular. Unfortunately, SB 1575 really just distracts us from having that dialogue and engaging in meaningful solutions.

Weakening our regulations on Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) expansion, and eliminating the matrix for prioritization of which lands should be considered for UGB expansion is, in fact, the last thing that we should be doing if we are seriously interested in addressing affordable housing. I am a former Lane County Planning Commission member, and served on the Lane County Boundary Commission for several years. I continue to be a Stakeholder in Springfield's current UGB update serving on the Commercial and Buildable Lands Committee. Springfield's analysis of its affordable housing needs, and its subsequent solution, are instructive. Housing is affordable not just due to the price tag of the dwelling or the rent one pays, but from a variety of factors. These include its proximity to transit and services. How far away is the nearest grocery store and how easy is it to get home with a week's worth of food for your family? Can you find a job close by and have a reasonable commute? How far away are schools or daycare for your kids? If your housing requires you get in a car and drive a ways to address your daily needs, its location quickly becomes more of an issue and can ultimately determine its affordability. And the poorer you are, the more this becomes an issue.

SB 1575 would allow communities to address their affordable housing requirement by promoting sites at the edge of the UGB and beyond, which is typically far from all of the requirements mentioned above that for lower income families actually determine the affordability of where they live. Additionally these lands are ordinarily underserved by urban infrastructure and expensive to develop – making them an unlikely candidate for inexpensive housing when all of the development costs are factored in. The land beyond the UGB may be less expensive, and easier to build on, but it may not actually result in savings for our communities or for the folks who end up living there.

Springfield's approach for complying with its affordable housing need was to identify urban corridors that could be redeveloped into higher density residential alternatives. These were typically along

corridors where transit service already existed or could be intensified. Housing that is relatively close to schools, transit and services offers a real potential for affordability.

I served as Chair of the Lane Area Commission on Transportation for the last year. During that time I had several opportunities to come together with leaders from all over the state to discuss the looming crisis in transportation faced by many Oregon communities. Metropolitan Portland is one example. The solutions to its growing traffic problems are limited and unbelievably expensive. And there are limited funds to make a difference. Commuter traffic increasingly impacts freight throughput in the region to the point that real and long lasting economic impacts may occur. A way must be found to reduce automobile traffic in and around Portland. Continuing to focus on growing the UGB and placing more and more people farther and farther from transit, their jobs and services is just plain stupid. It will not make housing more affordable but it will increase traffic congestion and make a difficult problem even harder to solve.

Finally, the most obvious target for the proposed UGB expansions envisioned by SB 1575 will be productive farmland. Currently, there is a requirement that lands considered for UGB expansion must, among other things, go through a prioritization process where the least productive and most impacted lands are considered first and high value farmland last. This logical process is abandoned by SB 1575. Ultimately, all of things that we eat have to be transported. To the extent we continually convert our valuable, irreplaceable and productive farmland into housing; we inevitably increase the costs we pay locally for food. The farther our food travels the more expensive and the less nutritious it will be. Nutrition and cost are critical to our most vulnerable citizens. SB 1575 is not a solution to their needs.

Thank you,

George Grier