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March 14, 2017

House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources  
State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 2893 (Urban growth boundaries)

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Chair Clem and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2893. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice.

1000 Friends of Oregon opposes HB 2893. We have reviewed the -1 amendments, which do not change the substance of our objection. Current law provides that when a city is expanding its urban growth boundary, it must first look to lands that are *not* in farm or forest production to expand. Even though farm and forest lands are the last priority for UGB expansions, cities may, and often do, expand on to such lands, but only first after evaluating areas that would not impact the area's agricultural and forest production.

This bill would allow lands with Class VII and VIII soils to automatically move to the top of the list for UGB expansions and urban reserve designations, regardless of their current productivity or contribution to the area's agricultural industry. These soils are among those that support Oregon's #1 agricultural commodity - cattle and calves. They should not be automatically moved to the top of the priority list. In addition, the term "predominantly" allows gerrymandering of these areas, such that large swaths of even more valuable farmland could be taken into a UGB.

Most importantly, this bill is *not needed*, because the law already provides a process whereby a city can bring lesser quality farm soils to the head of the line for future UGB expansions – and that is through designating urban reserves. Under current law, cities may designate areas outside the current UGB, where it may expand over the 10-30 year period, if additional land is needed. Urban reserves may include farm and forest lands, as well as nonresource lands. Through this process, a city may evaluate which of any lower quality farm areas is *appropriate* for possible future urbanization, based on its location relative to other farming operations, as well as other rural resources values, including wildlife habitat. When a city determines it must expand its UGB, it can then go first to any of the lands in the urban reserves – even farm lands.

Current law already provides a more thoughtful way for individual cities to determine whether farm and forest lands should come into their UGBs. We ask that you not recommend this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "M" at the beginning.

Mary Kyle McCurdy, Deputy Director