



March 13, 2107

Chair Alissa Keny-Guyer and Committee Members
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

PO Box 1544
Hood River
Oregon
97031

www.hrvrc.org

President

Mike McCarthy

Board Members

Anna Cavaleri

Ron Cohen

Margo Earley

Scott Franke

Jonathan Graca

Judie Hanel

Jeff Hunter

Lee Christie

Larry Martin

Mike McCarthy

John Mills

Polly Wood

Executive Director

Heather Staten

**Administrative
Assistant**

Lynne Davidson

RE: HB 2937 and 2938

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing:

The Hood River Valley Residents Committee is one of Oregon's oldest local land use advocacy groups. Since 1977 our mission has been to protect farms, forests, special wild places and the livability of urban and rural communities in Hood River County.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on HB 2937 and HB 2938 which expand residential uses allowed outside Urban Growth Areas on land zoned for rural residential and Exclusive Farm Use ("EFU") (HB 2937 allows ADUs and HB 2938 allows RVs for "residential purposes"). We support allowing these uses on land zoned for rural residential use but are *strongly opposed* to these uses on EFU.

Hood River County is famous for its pear, cherry and apple orchards. Farming is the bedrock industry of our local economy bringing more than \$200 million to Hood River through farm gate and first handler sales. Oregon's land use system, which highly restricts non-farm uses on land zoned EFU, has been a key component to our agricultural industry's past success and current vibrancy. Since 1973 when Gov. Tom McCall signed Senate Bill 100 into law, Oregon has maintained a strong policy to protect farmland with land use policies that require the "preservation of a maximum amount of the limited supply of agricultural land" and that protect farmland from conflicting uses that make farming more expensive or difficult. Both of these bills run counter to this time-tested policy that has done so much to strengthen Oregon agriculture.

We oppose allowing ADUs and residential RVs on EFU:

- **Increasing non-farm dwellings on working lands weakens Oregon agriculture.** There are already too many ways to get non-farm dwellings onto working lands (replacement dwellings, nonfarm dwellings, temporary hardship dwellings). Bringing additional non-farm people out into the country to live in the agricultural zone makes farming more expensive and more difficult. Despite its bucolic appearance, commercial agriculture in Hood River is managed more like an industrial zone (e.g. crop spraying by air and by ground, frost fans and smudge pots on frosty mornings, tractors on the roadway moving between fields, large trucks hauling fruit to market, large work crews during pruning and harvest) and many lawful farming practices are not understood or tolerated by non-farm residents.

- **More non-farm dwellings in EFU areas increase conflicts with farming operations.** Many farmers have depended on the restrictions on other uses in the farm zone to allow them to farm with limited conflicts with nearby landowners. Many farmers purchased land in EFU knowing it was an “Exclusive Farm Use Zone”--a zone committed to only farming. Conflicts to farming are real and expensive. Expensive because there are economic losses associated with problems caused by non-farm people in the area. And expensive because it takes a farmer’s time to deal with trespassers, deal with neighbors complaining about noise or dust or spraying, deal with dogs harassing livestock or jeopardizing a crop’s GAP status or deal with driveways blocked with parked cars during harvest time when farmers are scurrying to haul perishable crops to cold storage. We have heard numerous complaints from Hood River farmers about the impacts of increasing non-farm people in the farm zone. Further weakening the EFU zone by allowing additional non-farm dwellings will make commercial agriculture more challenging and less sustainable.
- **Increasing non-farm dwellings makes farmland more expensive.** Oregon’s statewide land use system preserves farmland for farming by creating zoning that severely limits non-farm uses of agricultural land. Part of the reasoning is that restrictive EFU zoning will keep farmland priced for farming. Each additional use the legislature adds to the “Exclusive Farm Use” zone drives the price of farmland higher. The real estate market prices land for its “highest use” and will surely build in the ability to place an additional house (the ADU) into the price of the property. We are concerned that this will increase the price of agricultural land to such an extent that it is no longer affordable by farmers intending to farm and that Hood River’s world class orchard land will instead be priced for wealthy second-home owners, vacation rentals etc.
- **These are not “Accessory” dwelling units.** There is no limitation in HB 2937 on whether the new dwelling is attached to the existing house, where on the lot it is located, its size, or its ownership. While called “accessory,” this legislation does not require the new dwelling unit to be subordinate to the existing house. Instead this legislation basically doubles the number of allowed dwellings on each and every parcel of farmland across the state.
- **ADU = STR.** Short term rentals or STRs (also called “vacation rentals”) have exploded in Hood River with the advent of Air BnB and other online services. Our guess is that most ADUs created under these bills will be used to tap into this lucrative new market rather than providing full-time permanent residences to locals. In Hood River, a rental property owner makes more in one week renting out an STR than they do in one month with a longterm rental. Last year more than 60 Hood River farmers came out against STRs on EFU noting that tourists were often completely clueless when entering a farming area. Many told stories of STR guests jumping fences to pick fruit from trees or take their dogs for walks in private orchards.

For all of these reasons, we recommend that House Committee on Human Services and Housing remove the provisions on EFU lands from these bills. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these bills.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Staten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small dash at the beginning.

Heather Staten
Executive Director