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March 20, 2017

Chair Lininger
House Committee on Economic Development & Trade
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 2012

Dear Chair Lininger and Committee Members:

1000 Friends of Oregon supports House Bill 2012. 1000 Friends 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.

House Bill 2012 defines the “Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region,” and establishes an associated Board. The Board is authorized to examine economic and work force development issues in a defined region of eastern Oregon near Idaho border. If needed, the Board will make recommendations for improvements in education, work force training, land use, and other regulations, and may make related investments. 1000 Friends welcomes this opportunity for an integrated, multi-agency evaluation of economic development issues and opportunities in this region.

In particular, HB 2012 is an opportunity for the state and region to coordinate focused investments to help the region’s #1 industry – agriculture - continue its growth trend, through research and development, value added production, improved transportation capacity, education, and more.

Eastern Oregon’s agricultural industry has seen steady growth in recent years, thanks in large part to the animal products, onions, and other diverse crops that thrive in the climate. Over half of eastern Oregon’s agricultural sales are produced in Malheur County, and the County is #4 out of the state’s 36 counties in agricultural production. It is also the state’s fifth largest dairy maker, and currently leads the Pacific Northwest as the United States’ seventh largest beef producer.

Eastern Oregon’s land and climate are assets that provide a lasting and growing economic foundation for the region, and HB 2012 offers evaluation and investments to reinforce that.

We urge the Committee to support House Bill 2012. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

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

Mary Kyle McCurdy, Deputy Director