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April 3, 2017

Senate Committee on Human Services
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: SB 1024

Dear Chair Gelser and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill, which would allow additional houses in rural areas. 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 Oregon opposes 1024. The bill would require counties to approve an additional house on a lot in rural residential areas. Counties would be prohibited from imposing restrictions on the additional house other than basic sanitation-related and building code conditions. We oppose this bill for the following reasons:

- Although SB 1024 states it is about “accessory dwelling units,” the definition is *not* of an actual accessory dwelling unit. Rather, it is of a stand-alone house. The bill defines the allowed units as an: “attached or detached permanent structure” that is “independent living quarters.” (p. 1, lines 6-8)
- The bill does not allow counties to either prohibit or condition such dwellings; for example, by limiting short term rentals or considering wildfire risk.
- The bill could effectively double the number of houses in rural residential areas, thereby approaching or even violating the definitions of “rural,” “urbanizable,” and “urban” in land use law. Rural residential areas are quite variable in size and zoning. Some allow 1 dwelling per 5 or even fewer acres and others 1 dwelling per 20 acres. The allowed density depends on several factors, including the surrounding agricultural and forest operations, groundwater and septic capacity constraints, wildfire risks, and wildlife habitat and migration routes. To uniformly allow another dwelling on every lot across these vastly different areas, if it increases the zoned density, is too broad a brush.
- Increasing the number of houses and people in these rural areas also significantly increases the conflicts between farm and forest operations, including increased congestion caused by non-farm traffic – either commuting into nearby towns and cities for work or vacationers going to and from short term vacation rentals; trespass and vandalism; water quality and quantity impacts; complaints about common farming practices such as noise; and greatly

increased wildfire risks. The increased driving to meet daily needs also increases greenhouse gas emissions.

- It will be difficult for cities to urbanize those rural residential areas that are adjacent to the city, due to their “exurban” density levels under this bill, if a UGB expansion is needed.
- Oregon has 708,000 acres of land outside urban growth boundaries, zoned for rural residential use. That is slightly less than the total amount of land that is inside UGBs (that is about 825,000 acres). There is not a lack of opportunity to build a new house on existing lots in rural residential areas – there is no need to potentially double this number.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Kyle McCurdy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director