

Dear Representatives,

I would like to register my strong opposition both to the proposed HB2222 and to the amendment offered by Representative Whisnant, which seeks to convert established statewide land use planning into a process controlled solely by a single county or a group of counties.

Deschutes County has already gone through a multiyear process exploring how to change how "non-resource" lands are managed. After extensive public sessions and participation by stakeholders, the County decided that the existing process to secure exceptions to EFU designations was adequate, without the need to change existing land use processes or zoning. If local residents and government have already examined what is essentially being proposed in this bill, and found it expensive and unworkable, why would the State Legislature seek to reopen this issue?

The proposal has multiple flaws:

There is no evidence that the proposed changes are necessary nor desirable. There is no evidence that existing processes are deficient.

There is no evidence presented showing how counties, especially those most strapped for resources and staff, could possibly do a more competent job of land use planning than the existing process. This was in fact the conclusion from the pilot carried out by three counties in southern Oregon. This proposal would likely create a burden on the very counties it putatively aims to help.

Because there is no requirement that any local result be consistent with well-established and beneficial statewide land use criteria, the proposal is a clear and unmistakable assault on Oregon land use laws. It must be seen as such, and would put lands throughout the state at risk.

As there is no evidence that land use planning is a constraint on economic growth, the only conclusion I can draw from the proposal is that it is really aimed at helping real estate developers, at the expense of the rest of us. Since when is it the role of the legislature to bestow gifts on a few to the detriment of the rest of us?

This bill and its amendment are bad policy without empirical justification or logical merit. Adopting them would be an embarrassment for a legislature interested in sustainable, longterm development that preserves the best that Oregon has to offer for all of us. Please reject it, as Deschutes County has already essentially done.

Sincerely,

Charles Humphreys  
Sisters, Oregon