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April 12, 2017

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

RE: Testimony on HB 2730 (-1)

Chair Clem and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 2730, a bill amending the definition of high-value farmland. 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.

Oregon's working farms and forestlands are critical components of Oregon's diverse economy and provide jobs for many rural Oregonians. The agricultural and forest land bases are vital maintaining these rural economies and the jobs that are sustained by them. These lands are already under threat of division, fragmentation, and development pressure. Each year several thousands of acres of farm and forest lands are lost through rezoning, conversion to nonresources uses and construction of nonresource dwellings.

The -1 amendment to HB 2730 that changes the definition of high-value farmland is a blatant example of super-siting – the practice of changing statewide land use laws to benefit one particular property or development. This bill is specifically intended to allow golf course development proposal on the Oregon coast, on an farm-zoned property known as Knapp Ranch in Curry County just north of Port Orford; a proposal that would otherwise require a goal exception under the existing land use process because the golf course development will permanently convert the farmland to a nonfarm use.

The golf course proposal that is subject of this bill has been contentious and controversial since its conception because it is located on productive farm and ranch land. 1000 Friends strongly opposes super-siting legislation and urges the Committee to resist this attempt to change laws to benefit one developer, which would set a very bad precedent. Oregon's high-value farmland a prized, unique and irreplaceable resource. It should remain protected as it is currently under state law to ensure the future of Oregon's farm economy and sustainable food production.

Further, the proposed amendment that would change the definition of high-value farmland goes beyond the scope of the relating clause in this bill as it does not relate to ORS 561.020, thus this amendment should not proceed.

Respectfully submitted,

Meriel L. Darzen
Circuit Rider Staff Attorney