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To: Members of the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources

From: Rhett Lawrence, Oregon Chapter Sierra Club

Date: February 8, 2018

RE: House Bill 4029

Chair Clem and Members of the Committee: On behalf of the more than 25,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club in Oregon, I am pleased to provide this written testimony in support of House Bill 4029.

As an organization with a long history working to protect water, wildlife, and public lands in Oregon, we support HB 4029 and believe that it is also worthy of your support. As you know, this legislation would prohibit the construction of a bridge across the Deschutes River within the boundaries of the Deschutes Scenic Waterway. The Deschutes River is home to a multitude of wildlife species including deer, elk, bald eagles, golden eagles, Oregon spotted frog, beaver, river otters, and many more. The Sierra Club believes that it is critical that we protect the dwindling wildlife habitat remaining in our state in light of rampant development and climate changes already occurring.

The Deschutes River was protected by Congress as a Wild and Scenic River in the 1980s and had previously been protected by the State of Oregon as a State Scenic Waterway in 1970. These protections were put in place to protect the river from various types of development, and the State Scenic Waterway designation specifically prohibits new bridges. We believe that the new bridge proposals that have come from the Bend Parks and Recreation Department in the last few years are incompatible with the federal Wild and Scenic River designation. The Oregon Sierra Club cannot support the dismantling of protections for our public lands and rivers.

However, the provisions of HB 4029 providing for the study of alternate routes for recreational trails in the Bend-Sunriver area is a notion we can support. For these reasons, the Oregon Chapter of the Sierra Club supports House Bill 4029. Thank you very much for considering our comments and please do not hesitate to contact me if I may be of further assistance to the Committee.