

February 5, 2019

Sen. Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Association of Oregon Counties Support for SB 2

Dear Chair Dembrow,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 2 on behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties. AOC represents all 36 counties in Oregon and works to ensure that the fiscal health of counties and the state is maintained while working to ensure that vital public services are not damaged beyond repair and that all Oregon communities can grow and thrive.

We greatly appreciate the investment Senate President Courtney has put into the interim workgroup that developed SB 2. This bill presents a modest but real opportunity for ten Eastern Oregon counties to gain a measure of self-determination by utilizing the ability to bypass the always cumbersome exceptions process if they have an acknowledged economic opportunity analysis that identifies employment opportunities outside of the Urban Growth Boundary.

It's no secret that many frontier Eastern Oregon counties are hurting economically. Land use laws are certainly not the sole reason for this, it is a multi-faceted problem that needs to be addressed with a variety of solutions. However, we do believe that granting counties additional flexibility, particularly in areas where land is not being utilized for farm or forest use, provides an additional tool for attracting business and employment opportunities to help rebuild the tax base.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on SB 2 and ask for the committee's support.