

ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES TESTIMONY ON HB 2329
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Thursday, February 28, 2019

I am Doris Penwell, legislative affairs manager with Association of Oregon Counties. The Association and Renewable Northwest came together to request sponsorship of this bill -- HB 2329

To develop this proposal, we have worked closely for a number of months with developers and allied organizations, including the planning departments of the counties that site renewable energy projects, through their local land use authority.

Two counties that are represented here today in support of the bill have done an exceptional job of siting relatively large-scale projects, both renewable and non. They are: Crook and Morrow Counties. Morrow County Commissioner **Don Russell** (also president of the Community Renewable Energy Association), Morrow County Planning Director **Carla McLane**, and **Ann Beier**, Crook County Community Development Director. As part of their responsibilities to the Counties, these individuals also work with the Energy Facility Siting Council when a proposed project is above the statutory development threshold for local permitting of renewable energy projects.

Since early 2000s and first development of renewable energy in Oregon, these and other key counties have gained considerable experience in permitting their projects and have established their unique processes to assure the public that the smaller-to-increasingly larger projects are efficiently developed and are effective. In every case, the public including surrounding landowners are part of their processes. Outside of renewable energy, counties and cities have been responsible since the land use system began for permitting all forms of economic development and essential service projects.

Before these representatives begin, it is important for me to make the point that not all counties have or would be prepared to site renewable energy projects. The bill establishes that projects can be sited at the local or state level. There are times when either is more desirable. We can be prepared to talk about how that differentiation can take place.

With Oregon's adoption of higher levels of renewable energy need in order to decarbonize our existence, adding more localized permitting ability to that of EFSC should move us faster and more efficiently, at less cost as well, to achieve our hopes.