

ASSOCIATION OF OREGON COUNTIES TESTIMONY ON HB 2322-1
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Tuesday, April 2, 2019

I am Doris Penwell, a policy manager at AOC who, among other areas, handles renewable energy issues. I am here today in support of HB 2322-1.

As far back as 2007, Oregon has been involved in developing state policies in support of renewable energy development, particularly beneficial to rural areas of the state. We seized upon the realization that moving toward use of renewable energy was an important way of supporting our overall environment AND helping to build stronger communities through investments. Policy makers have not done much to develop policy around integration of our one-of-a kind land use system with the occurrence of renewable energy development.

Association of Oregon Counties joined with Renewable Northwest to explore more responsibility at the local level for building renewable energy. But the lack of any Goal in the Land Use system that speaks to policies to be used to help guide local efforts in this regard has forced some stakeholder concerns on how we make decisions. Thus we proposed HB 2322. Renewable energy projects do not need to conflict with our land use goals of protecting farm and forest, or natural, cultural and historic resources. Siting can be done in a manner that addresses other values and minimizes impacts to other land uses.

Almost half of Oregon's 36 counties have reviewed applications for solar and wind energy projects. Counties evaluate renewable energy siting needs against statewide planning goals, statutes and DLCD administrative rules that don't always align with the State's efforts to address climate change issues. We are usually successful at siting projects because we rely on expertise from state and local partners; but sometimes we miss the mark and a case is appealed to LUBA.

Counties we work with can speak more eloquently about the need for this bill—those counties have made choices to approve projects on land that they believe is desirable; but it would be better if Oregon is more deliberate in how and where those choices are made.

We are excited to have this bill (HB 2322 as amended) that we hope you, as legislators, and stakeholders can support. The bill will allow an advisory group of stakeholders who can educate each other on our various perspectives. We do not view the Goal 13 amendment process as a mapping exercise, but more establishing policies around which development can occur, and approved at the local level. It is important that we begin this work soon. As you can see, to get this done timely and effectively, HB 2322 proposes funding from the legislature for DLCD to provide staffing and other costs of managing the process, including necessary outreach.

Please join me in supporting HB 2322-1.

