



Oregon Association of
Conservation Districts

April 3, 2019

To: House Committee on Energy and Environment
hee.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

From: The Oregon Association of Conservation Districts

Re: Opposition to HB 2329 EFSC Exemptions

To Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Reschke and Schouten, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 2329. I am testifying on behalf of the Oregon Association of Conservation Districts to express opposition to the bill. OACD serves and represents Oregon's 45 Soil and Water Conservation Districts, which are special districts governed by elected boards. The Districts protect and enhance soil quality, water quality and quantity, and habitat by supporting voluntary conservation in partnership with private landowners and managers as well as federal, state, and nonprofit partners. **HB 2329 would significantly impact agriculture lands and natural resources.**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) were founded following the Dust Bowl, an event that brought national attention to the need to conserve natural resources and natural resource industries and is now looked to as an analogue for the impacts of climate change. **The current EFSC process is instrumental in providing a layer of protection for agriculture lands and natural resources in its role of permitting and balancing state goals. If EFSC oversight is removed, those protections no longer exist, especially with the passage of HB 2322 which encourages changing land use Goal 13.**

In addition to exempting projects from EFSC oversight, HB 2329 increases the amount of high-value farmland that can be taken out of production for transmission facilities from the 100 acre limit now in place to 200 acres, further diminishing high value farmland.

In contrast to the growth of renewable energy, Oregon's agricultural lands are shrinking and threatened by development and other uses. Since Oregon's land use program was implemented in 1974, half a million acres of land has been taken out of production and 65,600 acres have been taken out of Exclusive Farm Use zoning. In addition to being the 2nd largest economic driver in our state (\$8.2 billion annually) and a source of long-term employment opportunities, agriculture creates important wildlife habitat and migratory corridors throughout the state. Furthermore, agricultural and natural lands are critical to climate mitigation and adaptation efforts. According to Griscom, et al. (2017), such lands can address 37% of carbon emissions globally, are among the most cost-effective solutions, and provide co-benefits like habitat, resilience to fires and

floods, and soil and water quality. **Fragmentation and development for residential or other purposes already challenge agricultural succession and conservation in Oregon. HB 2329 would introduce one more threat** as the proposed goal of renewable energy development competes with the other land use goals that make Oregon the thriving, beautiful, and resilient place it is.

We are a net exporter of power to other states. There are more than 146,000 acres of commercial wind and solar projects that will generate 3,213 megawatts of electricity pending. While we support renewable energy and the efforts of this legislature and many other Oregonians to mitigate and adapt to climate change, we cannot support industrial energy facilities at the cost of agricultural lands in order to export power to other states.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding HB 2329 and the importance of maintaining the conservation value of our agriculture farm lands while we pursue our renewable energy goals. **We encourage you not to pass HB 2329, which would have unintended consequences counter to the goals of agriculture land and natural resource protections.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anna Freitas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Anna" and last name "Freitas" clearly distinguishable.

Anna H. Freitas
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