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Oregon House and Senate Interim Committees on Redistricting

Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Oregon redistricting process required by demographic changes identified by the 2020 U.S. Census.

My name is Craig Markham. I live near Dundee, Oregon in Yamhill County, CD 1, SD 12, HD 24. I am retired from a 30-year career with the Oregon Department of Transportation as a wetlands biologist and environmental analyst. I am an elected precinct person for my area, working to improve voter turnout and support good governance.

I am deeply concerned at the increasing political and cultural polarization from which our state and country have been suffering over the past several decades. Rather than attempt to drill into the demography that has driven many of these differences, I will simply echo the testimony presented by Jamie McLeod-Skinner – that in our decisions about redistricting, we must do our best to mend our urban rural relationships rather than divide them further.

Jamie absolutely nailed it:

*“...the urban-rural divide...cannot be addressed by further dividing us into political factions. It will only make it worse. Political blocs are not communities of interest. Draft maps such as Plan B will further divide us into such political camps rather than recognize the opportunity for pursuing our shared goals. Natural resource solutions need both urban and rural advocates – our needs cannot be met by isolating us in rural-only districts. While it is true that the density of our communities may impact how we interact, we are all interdependent on our neighbors. **The drawing of political boundaries can either further divide us or set the stage to elect leaders charged with understanding and helping us achieve our common purpose.** We need more elected leaders accountable to rural areas and Plan B will only exacerbate the urban-rural divide.”*

I urge you to use these thoughts as a guide. They are a good compass for helping to bring us together and grow stronger by using our diversity to best advantage.

Craig Markham