

Members of the Senate Committee on Redistricting, Chair Taylor:

My name is Stephani Scott. Thank you for the opportunity to submit the following testimony for consideration regarding redistricting. I live in Bend, I am a parent, and an active community volunteer. During my career I have worked as an administrator in public education, community-based public healthcare, and as director of a nonprofit focused on educating decision-makers about the concept sustainability.

Our elected representatives come to office with expertise on many of the issues that concern their constituents, yet once in office they are ultimately responsible for learning about and advocating for broad and varied challenges. I am advocating for sensible boundaries that preserve their ability to focus their time and attention on the issues and values unique to the areas they serve.

Specific to our current boundaries, with a growth rate of nearly 3% yearly, the City of Bend itself is nearly large enough encompass an entire Senate district (current population is 106,023). House District 53 surrounds the City of Bend and will need to absorb more of its urban population to balance the number of people in each house district. Much like House District 54, it should have a more urban focus to reflect the community of interest of its largest population base, rather than try to balance the needs of rural and urban areas. If the region were divided up such that the attention of our Representatives and Senators is spread thin, in addition to concerns about fair representation, their knowledge and ability to accurately represent and make sensible decisions would be compromised.

Within these boundaries is the 5th largest school district in Oregon, a large Parks and Recreation District, OSU Cascades, Central Oregon Community College, 13 Neighborhood Associations, St. Charles Medical Center, Deschutes County Health, and many social service agencies (food banks, emergency shelters, Homeless Leadership Coalition, Latino Community Association, and more). Boundaries should stay as contiguous as possible with these service areas so that residents can be assured of their representatives' familiarity with them and therefore a strong voice for them.

Any new boundaries that impact Bend should consider that Bend is best represented by someone who understands, aligns with, and values issues concerning urbanization and smart growth. Most recently our community has come together to advocate for street safety, childcare, homeless housing solutions, housing affordability, closing the opportunity gap in education compounded by the pandemic, and more. Our community is doing work on diversity, equity, and inclusion across all sectors. Splitting up Bend would divert important attention away from this work. We encourage boundaries that enable us to count on our elected officials to familiarize themselves with these issues and support that work while also giving Bend the best chance to have our Representatives and Senators reflect our increasing diversity and the values associated with embracing our growth.

Our elected representatives need to be familiar with, engaged with, and have a vested and common interest with the people they serve to represent our community fairly and intelligently. The boundaries you consider will impact our representatives' ability to effectively carry out these responsibilities. Please help Oregon shine as a model for focused, fair, and balanced legislation as you consider new boundaries.

Sincerely,

Stephani Scott

Bend Resident