

Good afternoon Chair Taylor, Chair Salinas, and members of the House and Senate committees. My name is Melanie Kebler and I am resident of Bend and an elected Bend City Councilor testifying today in my individual capacity. I grew up here and I was in elementary school in 1992 when HD54 was changed to give Bend a dedicated representative in the legislature. Despite rapid growth since then and becoming Oregon's sixth largest city, Bend still only has one House District dedicated solely to representing us, and our Senate District encompasses the entirety of Deschutes County. Today Bend is large enough to fill two House Districts and is nearly large enough to have its own Senate District. It's time to fully take into account the changes that have happened in Bend over the years and respond to our need for strong representation of our city's issues and interests in Salem.

I want to urge this committee to consider Bend as a community of common interest and take into account our needs as a city when engaging in redistricting. Bend needs representatives who can understand and focus on the urban issues that we are facing as a growing city that cares about sustainable planning, affordability, and protecting our environment. The needs of the smaller towns and communities that surround Bend in the more rural areas of Central Oregon deserve appropriate representation that won't be overshadowed by being included in a district with the larger and more urban community of Bend. House and Senate Districts that are drawn this year should reflect Bend's position in Central Oregon as its economic, medical, educational, and cultural hub. We are the largest population center on this side of the mountains and we deserve representation in Salem that will focus on and be accountable to the community of Bend. Please do not draw the districts in a way that short changes both the urban interests of Bend and the rural interests of the communities that surround us. Finally I urge you to find a way to get this done in time for the May 2022 elections. It will be a huge disservice to the people in my city if we do not have new districts by then. Thank you.

Melanie Kebler
Bend resident