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House Committee on Housing
Oregon Farm Bureau Testimony on HB 3072
March 4, 2021

Chair Fahey, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 3072. By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's largest agricultural trade association, representing nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families in the state. While OFB appreciates the legislature's efforts in addressing workforce housing, OFB has concerns about the potential conversion of important agricultural lands that might result from HB 3072.

In general, OFB supports the use of Urban Growth Boundaries (UGB) as a means of dividing agriculture land from urban land, designating land within UGBs to provide space for all urban needs, such as housing, as well as managing the growth of a city in such a way that needs and services can be efficiently provided. However, any boundary expansion on land protected under Goal 3 must not impair the infrastructure needed to produce food and fiber for current and future generations.

With this in mind, OFB recognizes that HB 3072 attempts to condition an expansion area by mandating that it must be not on high-value farmland and the land must already be designated at Urban Reserve. While we believe that these restrictions are a step in the right direction on protecting agricultural lands, they unfortunately do not go far enough. There are many highly important agricultural lands that do not meet the definition of high-value farmland under ORS 195.300, that are necessary to support the agricultural community in certain regions, such as important irrigated, grazing, or viticulture lands. Moreover, OFB believes that class I, II, Prime, Unique, or other regionally significant agricultural lands should be excluded from the urban reserves inventory and preserved for agricultural use.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and please do not hesitate to contact us with any further questions.

Samantha Bayer
Policy Counsel
Oregon Farm Bureau
samantha@oregonfb.org