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Sen. Jeff Golden, Chair, and Members
Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 762

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 762. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a statewide nonprofit, membership organization that has worked with Oregonians for more than 40 years to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice. 1000 Friends has been focused on the tools the land use planning program can bring to creating and maintaining a wildfire prepared and resilient Oregon, including publishing a comprehensive report on this subject.¹

1000 Friends has worked closely with The Nature Conservancy and Sustainable Northwest on legislation to increase community preparedness, reduce future wildfire risk, and build resiliency to withstand the increasing severity and frequency of wildfires in Oregon. SB 762 -1 provides that comprehensive, forward-looking approach. Our testimony focuses on the land use and related aspects of this bill.

Land use is a critical component of a comprehensive approach to living resiliently with wildfire in the face of climate change. Statewide land use planning Goal 7 is "Areas Subject to Natural Hazards." Goal 7's objective is "to protect people and property from natural hazards" by reducing risk from natural hazards, including wildfires, through land use planning, coordination, and education.

Oregon's land use program - which protects farm and forest lands, promotes compact towns and cities, and conserves natural areas - has meant Oregon has suffered fewer deaths and damage from wildfire than other states, because we have less development rolling out into the wildland urban interface (WUI). Nonetheless, the 2020 wildfires showed us we are all still vulnerable, and Oregon still has much more to do. And, while Oregon starts with a relatively *low* percentage of homes and people in the WUI, we have a fairly high growth rate of new homes and new people in the WUI.²

¹ 1000 Friends of Oregon, *A New Vision for Wildfire Planning: A report on Land Use and Wildfires*, <https://friends.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/A%20New%20Vision%20for%20Wildfire%20Planning%202018.pdf>

² Martinuzzi, Stewart, Helmers, Mockrin, Hammer, and Radeloff, "The 2010 Wildland-Urban Interface of the Conterminous United States," 15-17.

SB 762-1 provides for land use and related tools to protect people, property, natural resources, the land on which we grow food and fiber, and critical infrastructure. These provisions include:

- A comprehensive statewide map of wildfire risk, including layers identifying vulnerable populations, locations of critical services such as hospitals, and critical infrastructure, the WUI, and other important data layers. This would be developed and maintained by the Oregon Department of Forestry, with input from Oregon State University, state agencies, the State Fire Marshal, local governments, federally recognized Indian tribes, and others.
- Direction to the Department of Land Conservation & Development (DLCD) to assess updates needed to the statewide land use planning program and local comprehensive plans and zoning codes to incorporate the wildfire risk map and minimize wildfire risk, including provisions regarding defensible space, building codes, safe evacuation routes, and development considerations in areas of high wildfire risk, allowing for regional differences. As with all such undertakings, DLCD will conduct a broad public engagement process to obtain many perspectives, including those of communities not usually represented in decision-making, and to understand and incorporate local characteristics and regional differences. This assessment would be submitted to the Oregon Legislative Assembly by the end of 2022.
- In addition to DLCD's engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders and interests in developing that assessment, SB 762 -2 sets up an ongoing Wildfire Programs Advisory Council to, among other things, review DLCD's findings and recommendations.
- SB 762-1 includes strategies to detect, prepare for, communicate about, and mitigate the environmental and public health impacts of smoke from wildland fires. It also requires implementation of a clean air shelter grant program.

The comprehensive approach of SB 762 is what Oregonians need now, to prepare and invest in our people, communities, farms, forest, and natural resources for a resilient future – starting with the 2021 fire season.

Sincerely,

Russ Hoeflich
Executive Director