



April 30, 2021

Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301

Submitted via electronic mail

Chair Hudson, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and McLain, Members of the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC), representing Oregon's 36 county governments, I write today in opposition to SB 605 A.

SB 605 A allows a rural fire protection district to draw a seven road-mile circle around a station and require the county board of commissioners to forcibly annex property within that circle into the district via an unspecified process. This approach ignores the will of local voters in a rural fire protection district and directly goes against a longstanding AOC tax policy principle:

A proposal must reasonably respect the different service priorities of the citizens of each county and minimize reduction of policymaking authority of the county governing body.

While the goal of increased fire protection is laudable, this bill does not guarantee increased spending on fire infrastructure nor assure protection for property owners. Furthermore, this measure sets up a scenario where commissioners are forced to follow through with annexation that's directly against the will of their constituents via an unknown, potentially costly process. AOC urges the Committee to not move forward with SB 605 A and remains a willing partner in discussions on how to better prepare our shared communities for the intensity of wildfire seasons ahead.

Regards,

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