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On Behalf Of:

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We need to be extremely cautious about expanding urban growth boundaries (UGBs). There is no question that Oregon requires additional affordable housing, but this should not compromise critical undeveloped areas that serve as refuges for wildlife and protect our natural resources. Occasionally, UGB's do have to be expanded to accommodate significant population growth, but there are already systems in place that allow for this to take place. In the meantime, there is no need to create additional loopholes for private landowners. In fact, this bill will undermine existing, community-wide planning processes for expanding UGB's via urban reserves.

The State of Oregon is already approving expansions of UGB's at an unprecedented rate. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; Oregon is seeing a period of unparalleled population growth. However, the rate of UGB expansion through current processes indicates that the current system is functioning. If we create more possibilities for UGB expansion, we risk nullifying the very purpose of Oregon's Urban Growth Boundaries. To prevent urban sprawl and the unmitigated expansion into natural and farm areas, we should be considering more effective housing solutions within our UGB's first. We should focus on building more affordable housing in urban areas rather than constructing in far-off, hard-to-reach areas of a growing metropolitan area.

Finally, this bill's stated goals are unrealistic. To what extent can a developer guarantee that all urban services will be provided in the new area within a period of two years. This is extremely ambitious, and make it questionable that the land will be used for workforce housing. Indeed, the bill doesn't ensure that new land added to UGB's will be used for affordable housing. Rather, it will allow for unchecked expansion that will undercut proving planning processes and enable sprawl.