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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure: HB3382

The Port Exemption Bill would fast-track port development for the sake of profit without protections for the cultural and ecological resources that are essential to Oregon's coastal ecosystems and economies. This bill sets a dangerous precedent, enabling corporations to bypass the critical regulations that protect environmental justice communities, including Tribal communities, communities of color, and low-income, rural, and coastal folks across the state.

The bill would open up the port's authority to dredge fairly indiscriminately and without regard to existing land use for certain special uses. The bill will only undermine existing conservation protections in our estuaries and our land use system. I am a Planner for a coastal county and I fiercely oppose this bill. It also undermines the current Estuary Management Plan update process happening in both Coos County and Lincoln County.

Oregon's coastal communities are on the frontlines of climate change. Climate resilience on the Oregon Coast will depend on the ability of healthy estuaries to protect low-lying coastal communities like Coos Bay from flooding and sea level rise.

Large scale dredging and channel modification cause irreversible impacts on eelgrass - a critical estuarine species responsible for carbon sequestration. The proposed Port of Coos Bay's channel modification project may occur where some of the largest and healthiest eelgrass beds are located in the Coos Bay estuary.

HB 3382 puts unchecked development over Oregon's climate and planning goals.

The Coos Bay Estuary is the backbone of the economy on the South Coast. For generations, Coos Bay's economy has depended on industries such as shellfish production, fishing, recreation, and tourism—all of which would be threatened if the major Ports were allowed to bypass environmental protections and land use laws.

Healthy bays support healthy coastal economies. The productivity and sustainability of the fisheries on the Oregon Coast is directly tied to the health of estuaries, which serve as the nurseries for 75% of commercial fish catch and even more for recreational fish in the US. According to a 2021 report, estuaries are also economically valuable due to the role they play in protecting coastal infrastructure from flooding, sea level rise, and other climate change impacts.

HB 3382 is designed to fast-track a specific project - the proposed Pacific Intermodal

Container Terminal project at the Port of Coos Bay. The bill is being pushed for by former legislators with personal investment in NorthPoint Development. Eroding long-standing land use laws for the sake of a specific corporate development sets a dangerous precedent across the state, enabling future developers to use legislative pathways to fast-track potentially harmful projects without environmental review.

Instead of creating shortcuts for corporate profits, coastal communities are urging Oregon legislators to vote no on HB 3382 to sustain the local industries at the heart of Oregon's coastal economies.

Even if the proposed bill were amended to focus on exemptions for Goal # 16 - Estuarine Resources, HB 3382 would erode the essential functions of coastal estuary management plans across the state, such as the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan, which are currently being updated through the Oregon Coastal Management Program.

The exemptions proposed in HB 3382 are a threat to Oregon's compliance with the Coastal Zone Management Act and may have a direct impact on DLDC's funding from federal agencies such as NOAA.

If passed, HB 3382 sets a dangerous statewide precedent for other industries to ask for similar exemptions from Oregon's land use goals, which puts environmental justice communities at risk for unregulated development across the state.