

February 7, 2025

To: Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Andersen, Vice-Chair Breese-Iverson, and members of the House Committee on Housing and Homelessness,

Re: Opposition to HB 2400, 2422, 2316

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2400, HB 2422, and HB 2316. I am writing to urge you to vote against these three bills.

Friends of French Prairie is the local land use advocacy group in the north Willamette Valley, most of our members being Oregon farmers. We oppose HB 2400, HB 2422, and HB 2316, because of the negative effects they will have on Oregon agricultural, forested, and public lands that sustain our communities.

In spite of our existing land use system, according to the Department of Agriculture, Oregon lost 666,543 acres of lands in farms in the period of 2017 to 2022. These bills disregard existing laws and further erode the land use system, especially our land use laws that encourage growth within existing Urban Growth Boundaries and the protection of agricultural and forest lands that Oregonians rely on.

HB 2400 would fragment Oregon's agricultural and forest lands by allowing an additional house on every rural property. It is written in a way to encourage short-term resale, with no safeguards for protecting these valuable lands that feed our communities. People who want or need an extra home on their rural property already have a variety of mechanisms to secure such a home, including seven different ways on farmland and six ways on forest lands. Plus, Oregon law already allows new homes for relatives of agricultural and forest land managers, and additional new homes for unrelated farmworkers.

HB 2422 would attempt to create sprawl from the outside in by allowing counties to bypass land use laws to more than double the density of certain rural lands with case-by-case rezoning. It also bypasses critical systems that ensure everyone, not just well-financed individual landowners, have access to the planning process. Our land use planning program intentionally includes safeguards, encouraging development where it is less costly, where sufficient infrastructure exists, where people have access to equitable transportation options, and where

agricultural and forestry operations won't be impacted. This bill encourages Oregon to ignore unintended negative consequences on our precious resources.

HB 2316 would disregard our sensitive natural areas that Oregon has built a national reputation on. Sprawl housing development, outside UGBs on public lands, is expensive, adversely impacts natural resources, and does not meet our housing needs. We should look at surplus public lands inside UGBs for housing development – where people can walk to school, see their neighborhood doctor, pick up produce from the corner grocer, and live within a thriving community. Lands outside our cities and towns will require significant infrastructure costs to become viable for building homes, and this bill would unnecessarily burden the state with those costs – before housing is even built. There are smarter, more affordable ways to build housing.

We urge the committee to oppose these bills for the negative consequences they will have on Oregon's productive farm and forest lands.

Thank you for considering my comments and allowing this opportunity for public input.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Benjamin D. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a light blue rectangular stamp.

Ben Williams, President