



March 6, 2025

Re: SB 78 – SUPPORT

Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Committee Members:

Friends of the Columbia Gorge (“Friends”) is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (“Gorge”).

Friends supports SB 78 which provides much need protection for Oregon’s farm and forest land by limiting the size of replacement dwellings.

SB 78 addresses Oregon’s law which allows homeowners whose homes have been destroyed in wildfire or another natural disaster to rebuild their home through a quicker process than going through the development approval process for a newly sited dwelling on farm and forest land. However, developers have used this law to purchase land in rural areas and build large, luxury homes which are sold for a significant profit.

This bill would update the law to limit the size of replacement dwellings to no more than 110% of the original dwelling’s floor area or no larger than a floor area of 2500 square feet. This is an important solution to ensure that these lands remain in the hands of farmers, forest managers, and other people who live in rural communities, and out of the hands of developers.

It is crucial that we protect our farm and forest lands. This loophole that allowed the construction of large replacement dwellings on rural properties was driving up land costs, forcing farmers and forest managers to compete with developers to purchase land. This bill will help protect Oregon’s working lands and keep housing in rural areas more affordable.

Please support SB 78 and protect Oregon’s farm and forest land.

Sincerely,
Madison Kenney
Conservation Organizer