

LU-24-027 IN-PERSON TESTIMONY SUBMITTAL COVER SHEET

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Date: 10/22/2025

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Written Testimony of Senator Suzanne Weber

Oregon State Senate – District 16 (Tillamook, Columbia, Clatsop, Washington, Multnomah Counties)

Benton County Commission Hearings – Coffin Butte Landfill Completion

October 22–23, 2024

LU-24-027

Dear Commissioners,

Once a mayor, always a mayor. My years as mayor of Tillamook taught me lessons I carry with me every day as a legislator. Chief among them is the reality that **cities operate under fiscal constraints that are real and unrelenting.** Cities provide the very basic, foundational services Oregonians rely on—clean water, safe streets, fire and police protection, and waste disposal. Our decisions as policymakers should never hamstring cities or put those core services at risk.

The question before you on Coffin Butte is not just about solid waste. It is about **livability** for our communities, affordability for working families, and predictability for businesses that keep rural Oregon strong. If we close or constrain a functioning landfill without a fully operational, transitional alternative in place, we are putting the cart before the horse. That decision would immediately burden families with higher costs, put more trucks on the road hauling garbage long distances, and add pressure to local governments already stretched to provide essential services.

I understand that no one enjoys talking about landfills. But ignoring this issue is not an option. Every family, every business, and every city produces waste every single day. And every dollar added to the cost of disposal is a dollar not spent on food, housing, or childcare for families, or on jobs, payroll, and investment for small businesses. For cities, those costs come at the expense of other services, directly threatening their ability to provide the essentials that define livable communities.

I urge you to recognize that Coffin Butte is not about expanding something new—it is about **completing a project already approved and long in motion.** Approving this modest completion ensures we maintain stability and affordability today while responsibly planning for tomorrow.

Commissioners, you are making decisions today that you will not personally have to bear the consequences of, but the region will—far beyond Benton County. I hope you keep in mind the decisions made before you—decisions you have been left to rectify and solve—and the unintended consequences of not approving the completion of this landfill.

Thank you for your service and for the thoughtful consideration you bring to this critical decision.

Respectfully,

Senator Suzanne Weber

Oregon State Senate – District 16

Former Mayor of Tillamook

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