

Re: SB 1555 opposition

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on SB 1555. Douglas County Farm Bureau is a grassroots non-profit organization representing over 290 member families which advocates for its members on issues affecting their abilities to continue their farming and ranching enterprises.

Douglas County Farm Bureau opposes SB 1555 because it would allow an additional on-Farm use on farmland. Farmland is a finite resource, and essential for our member families to not only maintain their livelihoods, but also ensure that future generations of agriculturalists have viable land base to create new or expand existing operations. When farmland is converted to non-farm use it is never returned to farmland.

Allowing non-Farm residences on lands zone Exclusive Farm Use (EFU), presents several problems in the view of the Douglas County Farm Bureau. Several pesticides used on farms require an application exclusion zone (AEZ), which applies to areas within 100 feet of the area where a pesticide is being applied. If an individual enters into that AEZ the application must be halted. Farmer's often need to apply the pesticides right up to their property boundary to protect their valuable crops from damage. If a parsonage were allowed in area's zoned EFU, there is a high probability that they would be sited within an AEZ, placing an additional burden on a farmer needing to protect his or her crop. While most farmers attempt to be good neighbors, and accommodate adjoining uses, they face the uncertainties of changeable weather in which to apply pesticides. If a Muslim Mosque, Jewish Synagogue, or Christian Church were sited on EFU land, this could very well preclude a pesticide application for the majority of a Friday, Saturday, or Sunday. Losing one day in which to protect a crop could mean the difference between having a bountiful crop or a crop failure.

Allowing non-Farm dwellings on farmland also presents the issue of individuals who dislike and sometimes protest generally accepted farming practices taking place at all hours of the day. People unaccustomed to the noise, dust and orders affiliated with farming and ranching often go to great lengths to infringe on neighbors' right to farm. This can result in retaliatory actions by the non-farmer and litigation requiring a farmer to engage in court proceedings when they should be tending to their crops or animals.

Using a religious exemption as a means to upend rural land use planning is a likely outcome of passage of SB 1555. This non-Farm use would require Counties to determine whether a religious official is bona fide and then treat them differently when they apply for a permit on lands zoned EFU. Counties are unlikely to be able to develop satisfactory religious test, and would be forced to allow any parsonage request to avoid claims of religious discrimination. An unscrupulous individual could declare himself a pastor of a "church", construct a building on his EFU zoned land as its sanctuary, and then be allowed to construct a "parsonage" for his residence on land where a residence would otherwise be precluded by Oregon's land use planning.