



OREGON
ASSOCIATION OF
NURSERIES

**Comments relating House Bill 2488, LCDC planning goals amendments
House Committee on Energy and Environment**

By Jeff Stone, Executive Director, Oregon Association of Nurseries
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Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Helm and Brock Smith, members of the committee, I am Jeff Stone and serve as the Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Nurseries. On the industry's behalf I am submitting these comments into the record and hope this signifies our desire to engage in the policy surrounding land use equity and its short and long-term implications on agriculture.

The Economic Footprint of the Nursery and Greenhouse Industry

The nursery and greenhouse industry are the state's largest agricultural sector, and the industry ranks third in the nation, with over \$1.02 billion in sales annually to customers in Oregon, the rest of the United States, and abroad. In fact, nearly 75% of the nursery stock grown in our state leaves our borders – with over half reaching markets east of the Mississippi River. Oregon's elite growers send ecologically friendly green products out of the state and bring traded sector dollars back to Oregon. We are both urban and rural and have unique perspective when it comes to land use planning. Nursery association members represent wholesale plant growers, Christmas tree growers, retailers, greenhouse operators and the entire supply chain to get product to market. Our members are located throughout the state, with our largest nursery growing operations found in Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill and Multnomah Counties.

Land use is all about balance

As you know, HB 2488 Requires the Land Conservation and Development Commission to make changes to statewide land use planning goals by December 31, 2026, to address climate justice by addressing climate change adaptation and mitigation and environmental justice for disadvantaged communities. The jobs/housing and I would add transportation, balance is critical for the entirety of the land use system to thrive. Without it, we repeat mistakes from the past and communities are rooted out for the priorities facing the state at the time.

I am pleased to share with you my experience and perspective on land use and the pressures that face the nursery industry. As Representative Helm well knows, I am a former Chief of Staff to the Metro Council, the regional government that is responsible

for management of the Portland area Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). During my tenure as Chief of Staff, I helped the elected council presided over two UGB decisions and I understand both sides of the growth debate. Open land does not signify that it is unused land. Many have described agriculture as an industry without walls – this is true. The nursery industry is a bridge between urban and rural communities illustrated by our top producing counties - Clackamas, Marion, Washington, Yamhill and Multnomah.

The State, through its authority, Metro and the metropolitan planning organizations all look at inventories – not only of housing and jobs but protecting “right to farm”, transportation, municipal infrastructure and agricultural impacts such as to water supplies. As a state, a level set on land use priorities is worth a vigorous discussion. However, decisions do not operate in a vacuum. Agriculture is a cluster and remember that when you site a fabrication plant or community housing on farmlands, you are replacing one industry with another.

HB 2488 does not exist in isolation

Oregon citizens support maintaining a strong agricultural sector. Consistently, polling shows that 77% of the people of Oregon value the protection of farm and forest lands. However, we must admit that many love the idea of farms, but not the activity of farming. The conundrum facing agriculture, municipalities and environmentalists is how land is to be used in the future. That debate could have profound impacts on how urban and rural lands coincide or collide.

Climate change and its ramifications are real, and the nursery and greenhouse industry see it every day. Considerable planning and state goals to mitigate climate has been in Oregon’s land use planning DNA for 40 plus years. Our state has not seen sprawl and a patchwork of transportation corridors like other parts of the country. This is due to achieving balance between urban and rural economies, housing needs and a pay as you go infrastructure. The one big downside of how Metro and other planners perpetuate, is that expansion of a boundary does not capture the full measure of infrastructure costs. This weakness of the decision-making process puts agricultural operations who have put in their own infrastructure as prime targets for expansion. This would place agriculture in the position that it does not wish to be put in – opposing bills such as HB 2488.

OAN is solution oriented and wishes to engage on this important issue

What is clear, is if the state allows non-farm development (residential and commercial) to encroach into traditionally agricultural areas, then our industry’s ability operate will erode. Every day, nurseries face increased transportation costs, rising labor costs and higher energy bills. However, the damage from these threats pale in comparison to the long-term disruption and displacement of farming that occurs when uncontrolled encroachment of homes and commercial development onto farmland areas occurs. It is not as simple as trying to resolve the inequities of the system through fixes that create more inequities. Thank you for your attention to our comments. We will continue to participate as a good faith stakeholder to achieve a balance between good policy and state goals for land use policy.