

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to SB 16. It sets a dangerous precedent for Oregon's land use laws and is fundamentally contrary to the vision of our longstanding land use program in this special state. Unlike most states in this country, Oregon has done a remarkable job of protecting farmland through careful zoning laws and urban growth boundaries. These laws help guarantee the vitality of our agricultural sector and the natural beauty of our state - two assets that make Oregon unique and a desirable place to live and farm.

Rezoning farmland to allow more houses that are not related to farming undermines the health of Malheur County's agricultural industry, which is in the top five of the state's 36 counties in agricultural production. Agriculture is Malheur County's largest employer and the county has made significant infrastructure investments - rail transport in particular - to support its ag sector. It does not make sense to take land out of agricultural production and risk weakening the industry overall in Malheur County.

Also, wildfire maps show the proposed development areas to be at high risk. There is other land available for residential development that is not zoned EFU, in addition to vacant residential lands already included urban growth boundaries.

Allowing SB 16 to become law puts us on a slippery slope towards the erosion of our land use laws across the state - laws that are the reason Oregon is such a beautiful place and such a productive agricultural engine.

Please show the wisdom to protect Oregon agriculture and stop SB 16 in its tracks. Sprawling housing development define most places in the U.S. nowadays. Let's keep Oregon special.

Thank you,  
Zoë DeSurra

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