



June 11, 2021

American Farmland Trust
Pacific Northwest Regional Office
1402 3rd Ave #1325
Seattle, WA 98101

Rep. Barbara Smith Warner
Committee Members
House Committee on Rules
State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 16

Thank you for the opportunity to register our opposition to SB 16. The American Farmland Trust is a national organization with a regional focus in the Pacific Northwest. Oregon has been a leader in the protection of its agricultural heritage and irreplaceable prime farmland for decades.

The unique statewide land use system has been the State's greatest strength in maintaining this legacy for future generations. In fact, our policy scorecard in our *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* report ranked Oregon as the highest in the nation for wise land-use planning policies that prioritize the protection of farmland. SB 16 threatens to undo these protections in Malheur County and will contribute to the conversion of protected farmland to nonfarm use.

The growing need for housing has put pressure on farmland as urban communities have sprawled into rural areas. This has led to conflicts between farming and nonfarming communities due to incompatible uses located in close proximity to one another, not to mention competition for water resources. The best thing Oregon can do to address both residential and agricultural needs is to invest in infrastructure in areas already designated for housing. In Malheur County this would be the city of Ontario, which has demonstrated through its 2021 Housing Needs Analysis that it has adequate buildable lands to accommodate the growing population.

Malheur County depends on the lands that support farming and ranching as a major economic driver for the region. Oregon has done well to protect these lands through statewide land-use policies. The Legislature should continue to seek creative solutions to meet the various needs that arise with a growing population, which includes the need for increased capacity to produce food for the region.

Sincerely,

Dani Madrone
Pacific Northwest Policy Manager
American Farmland Trust