

Submitter: Aaron Nichols
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3414

Hello,

I am writing in opposition to the -17 amendment to HB 3414 that would allow an exemption to the regular UGB expansion process in Oregon. I have only a few minutes to write this before the farm day starts so I will quickly outline my opposition.

1.) We are losing the best quality farmland very quickly in my part of Washington county and often replacing that irreplaceable farmland with large lot single family homes (as North Plains proposes right now) and low job, high environmental cost industries like data centers as Hillsboro builds every day. These urban growth boundaries are often sold as job creations or for affordable housing then, when no one arrives to develop that, we get million dollar homes and tax subsidized data centers. If anything, this needs far more regulation, not less.

2.) This amendment ignores many of the farm and rural communities that will be affected, often negatively, by expansions in favor of giving home builders even more privileged access to those in power. UGB expansions have at least some chance for public comment. At North Plains's public meeting on their UGB expansion last week over 40 people were in attendance (they have six chairs in the council room for guests on a normal day - just for context). This means that other folks affected, not just the home builders and other large campaign contributors who always have a seat at the table, get a say in what land to take and how to expand. It's not just the cities that are affected by UGBs, it's all the businesses and residents outside the cities as well. It takes a good planning process to engage these diverse interests but doing so is the only way to keep strong working lands and the communities that sustain them as we expand UGBs.

3.) To achieve our climate goals we need to make only very smart expansions onto the working lands of Oregon and none at all on to the best farmland. These are areas that can actually capture carbon and make local economies actually work. Furthermore, as climate change makes it harder to grow food and harder to get it imported by the worst affected areas (like the Colorado River Basin we hear a lot about now) we will need our lands to simply have a livable and productive future for our children. We have some of the best farmland in the world right next to our cities, it must be protected. Paving it over, simply because we find a rule too onerous to the profits of an industry and the time of a city council, is simply the new form of the climate change denial that has brought us to the brink of this disaster and is likely to push us over the edge. The legislature has shown itself to care about and try to address both the denial and the actual problems in other bills - it shouldn't falter here.

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