

HB 2203 Testimony

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Submitted By: Becky Crockett

Curry County Planning Director

Coos Curry Farm Bureau Board Member

Support: Allowing an RV on site for individuals providing security to protect commercial farm operations.

Background: There has been a substantial increase in criminal theft of commercial farm operations in rural areas over the past two years. Many of these crimes involve criminals “staking” out rural farms, waiting for farm owners and employees to be off site and then seizing farm goods. Undaunted by the lack of sheriff patrols and District Attorney leniency and staff constraints these crimes have become increasingly frequent, repetitive and embolden. Some farms have been hit multiple times with increasing damage to buildings, fences and of course loss of farm equipment, tools, animal feed, fertilizers, water tanks, etc. In one case the back of a barn was cut out to make room to remove large equipment. The increase in these crimes appears to be a result of two elements: The first is an increase in the number of ill-equipped migrant workers associated with illegal marijuana operations and the second is a continual tide of folks living in California licensed RVs into the rural areas of Curry County. Many of these folks collect a California stipend, drive across the border to rural Oregon, park along the roadside and commit crimes of opportunity – small farm equipment (chainsaws), mailboxes, porch packages, to support their methamphetamine addictions.

Action: An RV is allowed in forest zones across the state to protect logging equipment from theft and damage but is not allowed within the agricultural zones to provide security for farm equipment and supplies. HB 2203 would allow commercial farm operators to have similar on-site security to protect their investments. A farm All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) costs an average of \$15,000. – \$20,000., a small tractor runs up to \$40,000. The cost of animal feed, fertilizers, seed, and tools have all increased three times from the cost of these items in 2020.

With passage of HB 2203, local governments could grant approval for the temporary use of an RV for on-site security personnel on commercial farms through an administrative conditional use process and review/renewal on an annual or semi-annual basis.