

January 23, 2023

**Chair Helm and Members
House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources & Water**

Re: HB 2487 – Wedding & Event Venues in Exclusive Farm Use Zones

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and present information regarding our opposition to HB 2487.

I am Kathryn Jernstedt, President of Friends of Yamhill County. Also the fourth generation on the Jernstedt Century Farm, established in 1891. While the bill ostensibly does not include Yamhill County it is consistent with the pattern of chipping away at the fundamentals of Oregon's Land Use System and the foundational concept of Exclusive Farm Use.

HB 2487 does a disservice to our cities and towns where these activities can be supported by infrastructure and public amenities. Businesses have made investments to create venues in compliance with Oregon's Land Use Goals. The bill does not address adjunct activities like lodging, meal service, transportation, water, and sanitation. A great deal of time and energy went into the destination resort standards. There are alternative scenic venues without further reducing the protections on EFU and Forestry lands.

There are tangible and intangible impacts on farm activities when nonfarm uses occur near active farming. It used to be that the matted down spots in fields were due to wildlife or wind events. Now the search for the perfect scenic backdrop for photo shoots leads to trespass and crop damage. Crimson clover is a common target and the further into the field the better. Fences are breached to "feed the horse apples" without understanding the issues, like diabetes, or the level of socialization of the animal. Pets are allowed to roam in other's fields that have been baited for vermin. A wedding operator has tried to compel hours of operation for irrigation pumps on a bona fide water right. Most farmers try to cooperate rather than invoke their "right to farm" but there are wind, weather, crop development stages that are time sensitive.

I have extracted balloons from celebratory "launches" from fields, fence rows, and equipment. Sky lanterns and fireworks are largely banned but resources are not adequate for enforcement. I have witnessed near-miss as well as actual damage from drivers who insist on passing farm equipment in transit. Drivers disregard the scale of the equipment, limited rate of travel and complexity of handling. They even ignore blind spots and no-passing lane markers.

The facilities necessary for events compromise crop uses. Diverting existing buildings from their farm use or constructing new ones. Parking areas, whether gravel, paved, or mowed for fire prevention, are no longer suitable for crop production. Assembly areas like groomed lawns, tents, or stages are not producing food crops. Soil compaction can be inflicted in a matter of weeks but take years in the remediation.

Yamhill County has firsthand experience with the hazards of drinking and driving on rural roads. Responsible tasting rooms have trained staff to oversee the consumption of alcohol. This training includes the tools to assess level of inebriation and a management structure to stop service. Fraud family dynamics, open bars, untrained staff at weddings and events present vastly greater hazards. Who knows how many non-injury accidents or near misses happen along dark rural roads traveled by people unfamiliar with the area and/or impaired. In at least one case covered in local papers the antagonists left the venue in a car, the fight escalated, one of them made the decision to walk home and was found dead in the ditch the next day.

The catch phrase “vertical integration” has been used to push the boundaries of concepts like tasting rooms, agritourism, home occupations, and bed and breakfasts far beyond the original legislative intent to the detriment of our productive agricultural lands. The bill is another assault on Oregon’s Land Use Goals.

Thank you for your attention.

Kathryn Jernstedt
Friends of Yamhill County