

WVSSA

Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association

March 8th, 2023

Thank you to the members of the Senate committee for considering my testimony in support of Senate Bill 789. I am the Public Relations Chair for the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association; I am also an Agronomist and farmer in the Willamette Valley. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB 789. The Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association maintains a Seed Quality Management Plan, open to those who wish to join our association and agree to follow the written guidelines that have been developed over decades of specialty seed production for the purpose of maintaining crop purity and plant integrity to meet the specialty seed industry's standards. The specialty seed industry has a vested interest in maintaining the Willamette Valley Protected District. I personally have been working on this issue for over a decade. At long last we have come to a point where a well-reasoned coexistence can be made permanent.

The Willamette Valley Protected District and its prohibitions on rape seed and canola have been in existence for 30 plus years. Using the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Associations regulations as a guideline, the 500-acre cap recommended by the OSU study, and the permitting process through the Oregon Department of Agriculture to provide a process and transparency for siting canola fields; we have arrived at an equilibrium, a status quo.

The calculus at this point is straight forward, expand the cap and increase the risk in an unpredictable way. Deregulate canola and rapeseed and further imperil specialty seed production for all in the Protected District. I have read that in the PNW alone canola may expand to 400,000 acres this year. The world is not going to lack for canola production without the Willamette Valley. Are we to join the race to the bottom that is common with commodity crops or are we going to maintain the integrity of the protected district as the jewel of vegetable seed production and incubator of unique crops and opportunity for new producers that it currently is.

This should not be a divisive issue. It does not make winners and losers; SB 789 continues the 30-year history of the protected district and maintains opportunity for all. If the intent of prior legislation was to prove the concept, then I believe we have succeeded. SB 789 is what coexistence looks like and I urge everyone who believes in the principles of coexistence to support it.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association

Charles Ortiz