

Submitter: Marie Bowers
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure: SB1087

Chair Lieber and members of the Committee,

My name is Marie Bowers, I am a fifth-generation farmer in Coburg, Oregon. I am also the past president of Lane Families for Farms and Forests and Oregon Women for Agriculture and a member of the Lane County Farm Bureau.

I am here today in Support of SB 1087, the farm café bill. For the record, I will have no direct benefit from this bill. However, I support my fellow farmers who seek to enhance their current operations.

As farmers we are faced with numerous challenges that we cannot control, such as price of fuel and fertilizer, cost of labor and market uncertainty. To sustain our livelihoods, we seek to diversify so we are not solely dependent on one revenue source.

When we diversify, we look at options that fit with our current business model. On our farm we look for different crops that work with our soil type and current equipment.

For others who already directly sell produce to the consumer it would make sense to add a farm café. It would allow them to showcase their products as well as neighboring farmers too. It also encourages the consumer to shop and eat local while learning about the local farm economy.

This bill is specific to Lane County and has a very narrow scope who can own and operate a farm café. It is not converting the existing farm into an In & Out Burger, it's adding another tool in a farmer's bucket to remain a sustainable farming operation while benefitting the community.

I am huge advocate for getting urbanites out to the farm. In Lane County, both Oregon Women for Agriculture and Lane Families for Farms and Forests focus on helping people understand what's happening in the fields and the forests. There are crop ID signs scattered all around Lane County helping the passersby know what's being grown. There are tours and dinners offered to help introduce and put a face on their local farmer and forester.

This bill has the added benefit of fostering those conversations of understanding about what happens in the field and our local food and fiber production.