

Submitter: Matt Van Wey

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB1537

I would have attended this hearing if I wasn't so busy farming! While we support the majority of this housing bill, we oppose this bill as long as it contains provisions for the expansion of UGBs. This is a threat to the livelihoods of current and future generations of farmers in Oregon. The focus should be on infill, creating housing within current City Limits. Let the existing Land Use Protection Laws work as intended, and not turn Oregon into a sprawling suburb and farm and food desert.

My wife and I are first generation farmers. We own and operate a thriving vegetable farm in rural Clackamas County on the edge of the Estacada UGB. Access to affordable farmland was a major hurdle for us and many others who hope to pursue a career in agriculture. State and County protection as Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) is the primary reason we could afford our land and the 130 year old farmhouse to start our family and farm business.

Proximity to an urban center is vitally important for a small or mid-scale farm such as ours. When prime farmland such as the land we manage is converted to housing, commercial, or industrial development, there is no going back. There are many small cities like Estacada whose UGB's border prime farmland and will annex these areas given the opportunity. These lands are some of the most fertile in the nation, thousands of years of soil formation to provide our region with a bountiful harvest for its population. Even if the land isn't immediately converted to housing, once the zoning changes, it will no longer be affordable as farmland and will eventually be sold off and split up.

Oregon has been a model for preserving a thriving farm economy intermixed with urban centers. We urge the committee to consider the impacts UGB expansion will have on this.