

Chairman Helm, members of the committee

February 13, 2024

Testimony on behalf of the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association in support of HB 4059 dash 7. I want to take a moment and thank all who have worked in good faith on Brassica Protection.

My first testimony on canola some ten years ago focused on the concepts of certainty and opportunity. As I recall I testified that good fences make good neighbors and good regulations are like good fences, they can create the certainty that allows them to optimize opportunities and limit the risks that could lead to catastrophic losses. HB4059 dash 7 is good regulation. It hits the mark, it is direct, simple and allows for government agency flexibility as needed.

In September I spoke to this committee about what was essential to implementing continued coexistence with brassica producers and expanding opportunity while protecting existing industries. The two things that I focused on were the necessity of codifying isolation distances and enhanced regulation around GE Brassicas. I still believe that is necessary.

HB 4059 dash 7 achieves both these steps in a way that logical and well-reasoned people can embrace. This bill doesn't need to solve every nuance of Brassica coexistence it just needs to cement the essential elements that constitute coexistence's key logs. HB 4059 dash 7 will set a precedent if passed but it won't be one of fear but of cooperation.

Science employs systematic, empirical methods that draw upon observation or experiment. To deny that GE brassicas can pose unique challenges and risks is to deny science. It is well known and documented that the gene flow from GE canola is difficult in the extreme to control in environments full of genetically common hosts. And as such I would entertain that its technology warrants practical and differentiated regulation.

Technology refers to the application of scientific knowledge for practical purpose or applications. As an example of practical application of technology and responsible regulation thereof I would turn to how we regulate pesticides according to differing levels of risk; these representative levels caution, warning, danger, and restricted use. Discerning people can understand that you can support science and technology and still seek appropriate regulation and uses of technology. The unique biome that is the Willamette Valley warrants an abundance of caution where it concerns the potential widespread introduction of GE brassicas.

We spend far too much time talking about winners and losers. What has been crafted here is a bill that creates opportunity and protections for all brassica seed producers. The only losers in this game are those who would let dogma and rhetoric stand in the way of opportunity and create unwarranted risks.

GE technology and canola do not hold a monopoly on science, The conventionally bred brassicas produced by the specialty seed industry are science and technology based too. They play a significant role in the Willamette Valley's agricultural economic engine.

HB 4059 dash seven is a rational and well-reasoned solution. If we cannot agree to that then we need to extend the status quo, maintain the 500-acre cap on canola and extend the sunset until such a reasonable solution is achieved. Thank you.

Sincerely, Charles Ortiz, WVSSA Public Relations Chair