

Submitter: Michaela Hammer

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire

Measure: HB4059

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod and members of the committee:

My name is Michaela Hammer and I am writing in support of HB 4059-A. I am a farm owner and seed grower in Corvallis. The Willamette Valley Specialty Brassica seed industry is vital to the agricultural landscape of Oregon and we are so lucky to have the land, expertise and conditions to support this unique industry. We should protect seed farmers' ability to grow the seeds that produce millions of pounds of food across the world.

I operate Humming Bee Nursery, a small organic nursery just outside of Corvallis and, because I just moved my operations, still have crops in the ground in Marcola in Lane County as well. A small but significant part of my business is growing certified organic brassica seed on contract, and a large portion of the plant starts I sell are bred to be locally adapted to our very special region by the organic seed grower stakeholders in this conversation. Because a reasonable agreement could not be reached after the work group process, extending the current regulations is the only viable option.

Removing the protections for specialty seed is not worth the economic risk considering that organic brassica seed production nets hundreds of times more dollars per acre than canola; it's not worth the risk to our ability to breed locally adapted brassica varieties in a fast changing climate, especially considering that there are numerous other oil seed crops that growers could choose instead of canola; and it's not worth the risk to future generations here and around the country and world that will benefit from all the new varieties of broccolis, kales, mustards, and cabbages that our specialty seed breeders have yet to create.

We know that HB 4059-A is not the end of the road and we will have to find a more permanent solution in the next few years. I urge legislators to listen to the specialty seed growers in this process. Just because we are not the biggest, most industrialized farms does not mean that we have any less value in the system. Please respect our knowledge of the plant biology, industry standards and best practices that have made this a thriving industry here in our state. In particular, we need future policy to include a public pinning map, seed lot testing, proper isolation distances, and shared risk for all parties rather than leaving it all to small seed growers.

Thank you for all the work you've put into this amendment and I look forward to following the process as we forge a solution in the coming years.

Thank you,
Michaela Hammer

Humming Bee Nursery
Corvallis, Oregon