Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, Members of the Committee,

My name is Lesley Tamura and I am the board chair of Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers Association and a pear grower in Hood River County. I ask you to oppose Senate Bill 747.

High costs of fertilizer, coupled with non-existent profit margins, already discourages farmers from applying more than what is necessary to support our crop. After labor, it's one of our highest cost inputs. Over-applying fertilizer isn't just a waste of money, it has a negative effect on our trees, causing them to grow an abundance of non-fruit bearing wood and creating higher labor costs for our harvest and pruning seasons.

Despite being a small family farm that would not be held to the reporting requirements in this legislation, we regularly use soil tests to have a better understanding of our fertilizer needs. In my own orchard, soil tests from one block to the next shows different nutrient levels, pH measures, and physical textures. The soil 25 feet apart can have different fertilizer needs. This dictates different needs in different areas of the same contiguous piece of property. Different varieties of my pears also require different fertilizer rates. I often have to apply a higher rate to my Bartlett pears than my Anjou pears.

My fertilizer needs vary widely based on so many factors, including soil type, crop size, weather, and nutrient needs. My fertilizer application rates can also vary from year to year depending on crop load. One year I can do only one application and it's sufficient, the next year I may have to come back and do a second application if I have a larger crop of pears. This means that application rate alone is not a method for determining whether I am over-applying fertilizer.

There is no standardized guidance on rates, and there is no methodology for determining "over-application" that can be applied to all locations and all commodities across the state because so many variables must be considered from farm to farm. With civil penalties of up to $10,000 per violation included in this legislation, that means we could be forced to pay huge amounts of money even when we are following responsible best practices and doing everything we can to monitor and reduce our fertilizer usage, all because this policy was written without any knowledge of the science behind it. Testimony that claims this is merely data gathering is incorrect, as the bill language clearly states that penalties can be assessed due to

over-application, despite not having a clear understanding or measure of what "over-application" is.

This concept shows a lack of understanding of the science behind crop nutrition and groundwater impacts. What is being proposed is an expensive program that will not at all accomplish what is suggested in this legislation. It will cost farmers and growers in additional regulations and potential penalties, without any scientific data to support these regulations and penalties.

Protecting our water supply is a hugely important issue, especially for the Umatilla Basin region, and if you really want to take steps toward reducing fertilizer's impact on groundwater, then you need to target all businesses that apply fertilizer (such as gold courses), work with producers and soil nutrition experts to create policy that will accomplish just that; not follow this misguided concept created by lawmakers that have no background or experience in agriculture. I recognize the intention behind this bill, but if you truly want to address this, then you have a responsibility to listen to the experts in this scientific field – because that's what it is, a science - and work with them to develop legislation that will achieve this goal. Senate Bill 747, as it is drafted, is nothing more than arbitrary and ultimately meaningless policy that will cost a lot of time and money, but won't actually achieve anything. Thank you for your consideration.