

February 27, 2025

Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire  
Oregon Legislature

RE: Opposition to SB 427

Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing over 6,500 family farms and ranches that produce more than 220 agricultural commodities. From hops and hazelnuts to cattle, cranberries, and timber with operations spanning from just a few acres to thousands, our members utilize all farming methods including organic, conventional, regenerative, biotech, and even no-tech.

On behalf of OFB, I write in strong opposition to Senate Bill 427. These comments are intended to address some of the unique concerns of Oregon's farming and ranching community and are offered in addition to the concerns expressed by a broad coalition of water users—including OFB—in opposition to SB 427.<sup>1</sup>

Oregon's farmers and ranchers rely on water management flexibility to adapt to changing environmental conditions, market demands, and evolving best practices in agriculture. SB 427 introduces a vague and overly broad standard that would severely limit water right transfers, reducing the adaptability of farmers to adjust their cropping systems and efficiently use available water resources in response to environmental, market conditions, and other considerations.

### **Water Transfers Are Essential to Modern Agriculture**

Oregon's agricultural economy depends on the ability to transfer water rights to match crop needs, shifting water use within and between farms based on factors such as:

- Soil health and crop rotation strategies,
- Drought conditions and water availability,
- Market-driven changes in crop selection, and
- Technological advances in irrigation efficiency

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2025R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/134897>

Under existing law, water right transfers are already subject to strict review to ensure they do not enlarge the right or injure other water users. SB 427 goes beyond this established standard by introducing an undefined requirement that transfers must not cause the “diminishment of streamflow.” This provision creates uncertainty, increases regulatory delays, and severely threatens the ability of farmers to adapt to changing conditions.

### **SB 427 Will Have Unintended Consequences for Oregon’s Agricultural Sector**

If implemented, SB 427 will:

- Undermine flexible cropping systems by making it harder for farmers to adjust their water use to meet shifting needs.
- Increase regulatory delays by requiring additional, complex streamflow analyses before approving routine transfers.
- Reduce on-farm water efficiency improvements by discouraging farmers from seeking better irrigation management strategies.
- Threaten rural economies by limiting the ability of farms to remain competitive and resilient in an already challenging water landscape.

### **A Better Approach: Supporting Flexibility While Protecting Resources**

Oregon must balance the critical protection of water resources with mechanisms ensuring that farms and ranches can remain viable. This means:

- Maintaining clear, science-based, non-subjective standards for water right transfers.
- Ensuring that efficiency improvements and conservation efforts are encouraged, not penalized.
- Recognizing that agriculture’s ability to adapt is critical for food production, rural communities, and Oregon’s economy.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to oppose SB 427 and instead focus on policies that promote sustainable, flexible, and efficient water management.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to working with you on solutions that ensure a resilient water future for Oregon’s farms and ranches.

Sincerely,



Ryan J. Krabill  
Oregon Farm Bureau