

February 28, 2025

Senate Committee on Housing and Development
Oregon Legislature

RE: Opposing SB 438

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's most inclusive agriculture organization, proudly representing over 6500 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.

OFB respectfully opposes SB 438, which allows rural property owners to construct an additional dwelling for a relative on land outside an urban growth boundary. While we recognize the intent to provide flexibility for rural families, this bill is inconsistent with Oregon's long-standing land use policies designed to protect agricultural land and would undermine Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zones.

Oregon's land use system was established to protect agricultural land for food and fiber production, preventing fragmentation and non-farm development that threatens the viability of farm operations. OFB has consistently opposed the establishment of additional non-farm dwellings in EFU zones, as such development increases land use conflicts, limits future agricultural expansion, and places additional regulatory burdens on farm and ranch businesses.

SB 438 fails to require that additional dwellings be connected to farm or ranch operations. Under existing law, additional farm dwellings are allowed when they are necessary for and actively involved in agricultural operations. However, this bill would permit additional dwellings without any requirement that they contribute to farming activities, opening the door to increased rural residential development in areas intended exclusively for agricultural production.

Additionally, increased residential development in EFU zones often leads to land use conflicts—new residents unfamiliar with farming practices may object to normal agricultural activities, leading to complaints, litigation, and restrictions on farming operations.

While OFB supports private property rights and policies that allow farm families to continue their way of life, those policies must be balanced against the need to protect Oregon's agricultural land base. The existing process for additional farm dwellings already provides a pathway for multi-generational farm families to remain on their land while ensuring that EFU zoning remains focused on agricultural production.

For these reasons, Oregon Farm Bureau strongly opposes SB 438 and urges the Legislature to reject this proposal in order to uphold Oregon's commitment to preserving farmland for future generations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryan J. Krabill', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ryan J. Krabill
Oregon Farm Bureau