

Public comment on SB78

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 78. I urge you to support this bill.

Oregon's values have long been to support family farms and protect agricultural and forest land from unscrupulous development.

I am an Oregonian who supports SB 78. This and SB77 are bills would help close long-abused loopholes that are bad for rural residents, rural economies, and our state as a whole.

SB 78 deals with the confusing issue of speculative land pricing for high-end residential development, fixing misuse of "replacement dwelling" provisions, while protecting the ability for homeowners in farm and forest zones to replace a home lost to natural disaster or decay. This helps stop conversion of thousands of acres of resource land into elite residences at the expense of working farmers and timberland managers. Let's not allow the wolves to benefit when we try to support those who truly need support after wildfires.

Having lived in Central Oregon for over 16 years as well as now living in Salem, these types of "deals" only help the big investors from out of state and are not good for the community. In Central Oregon, over-development is literally making the community run out of water and those who seek more big developments get away with it. Also, increasing wildfire risks are everywhere as we know and haphazard approaches to development are harmful.

Oregon agricultural and forest land is being lost to luxury home developers who are misusing the limited authorization for "replacement dwellings" in Oregon's exclusive farm and forest zones. This both takes land out of production and drives up the price of nearby agricultural and forest land. Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers – especially people who are just growing their businesses – are finding it increasingly difficult to locate land they can afford to lease or purchase.

Oregon is losing nearly 300 tracts of agricultural and forest land every year for high-end residential development in the form of replacement dwellings. That hurts family farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers who need large blocks of undeveloped agricultural and forest land for efficient food and fiber production. Oregon has the best agricultural products in the country!

Thank you for this legislation which I support. It's time for the legislature to again pay serious attention to Oregon's farm, range, and forest land. The longer we ignore these issues, the more we do irreparable damage to Oregon's precious resource lands and the families that work hard to feed our communities. Once we lose these lands, we can never go back. Oregon's farmers, ranchers, and timberland managers deserve better.

I am in favor of increasing housing production but not at the expense of Oregon's existing land use laws and protections. Let's keep Oregon, Oregon!

Jennifer Valentine

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