

Friends of French Prairie

Friends of French Prairie
is an Oregon non-profit corporation

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March 3, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire

Re: SB 77 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and Committee Members;

We submit this testimony because a loophole in the statutory provisions for “home occupation” businesses in rural homes is being abused to allow large-scale hospitality and entertainment facilities, as well as other uses not consistent with agricultural zoning to occur on land designated for agricultural and timber production.

Simply put, this problem needs to be addressed and clarified in order to tighten the definition of “home occupations” and providing clear and objective standards to ensure the primary use of a rural home is residential and not commercial. Besides hospitality and entertainment facilities, within a mile of my home, an asphalt paving company based in Wilsonville purchased a 5-acre piece of property with a small house. They then erected a “farm building.” That “farm building” became the maintenance shop for trucks and asphalt equipment, much of the ag land became parking for that equipment, and the house became an “office” under a broadly defined home occupation law.

SB 77: Would prevent the abuse of “home occupations” on agricultural and forest land. The home occupation provision is vaguely written and allows violators to evade the legislature’s specific requirements for such nonfarm and non-forest uses. W

The proposed legislation would close the loophole by clarifying the definition of “home occupations” and providing clear and objective standards to ensure the primary use of a rural home is residential and not commercial. This matters because while Oregon land use law allows people living in exclusive farm and forest use zones to operate small businesses, called “home occupations,” within their homes, such as bookkeeping services or small-scale childcare facilities it was not intended to accommodate many egregious uses, such as the example above.

As the land use advocacy group in French Prairie, Oregon’s agricultural heartland and home to the state’s best and most productive soils, we are asking you to support this bill to protect our valuable natural resources. 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 worse the problem will become, and the harder it will be to fix it.

Sincerely



Ben Williams, President