

Submitter: Sydney Cyrus
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB788

Written Testimony in Support of Oregon Bill SB 788

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Oregon Senate Bill 788, which would allow for weddings and events to be held on farmland east of the Cascades, provided they comply with county-imposed public health and safety requirements. This bill is a necessary and positive step in recognizing the economic and educational value of agritourism and supporting rural property owners in diversifying their income.

As a resident of Deschutes County, I have witnessed firsthand how restrictively interpreted agritourism rules already limit opportunities for farm owners to generate income and share knowledge about agriculture with the public. By allowing farms to host events, SB 788 provides property owners with an additional revenue stream while also fostering a greater appreciation for sustainable agriculture and rural communities.

There are several key reasons why SB 788 should be passed:

Economic Benefits for Rural Communities – Many farm owners struggle to maintain financial stability due to fluctuating market conditions and rising operational costs. Allowing events on farmland provides a critical source of supplemental income that can help sustain family farms and boost local economies.

Education and Agricultural Awareness – Events held on farms offer the general public an opportunity to learn more about where their food comes from, the importance of sustainable agricultural practices, and the challenges that farmers face. This knowledge is essential in fostering a more agriculturally literate society.

Supporting a New Generation of Farmers – Most farmers today are nearing retirement age. By increasing public engagement with agriculture through farm events, we can inspire and educate younger generations about farming, encouraging them to consider careers in agriculture and land stewardship.

Reasonable and Flexible Implementation – SB 788 ensures that counties retain the ability to impose reasonable restrictions for public health and safety. This maintains a balance between supporting agritourism and addressing concerns from local

communities.

Recognition of Existing Demand – Farm-based weddings and events are already extremely popular, and legalizing these activities in a structured and regulated manner ensures they can be conducted safely and responsibly.

Alternative Income for Farmers Affected by Water Conservation Efforts – In places like Jefferson County, where water conservation efforts have significantly reduced the income of many farmers, allowing them to hold other agriculture-related activities would provide a much-needed financial lifeline. This enables them to continue managing their land effectively, preserving agricultural traditions, and preventing the shift towards large, commercialized agriculture operations that may not prioritize land stewardship as smaller farms do.

Passing SB 788 would be a significant step in promoting agritourism and sustaining the viability of rural economies in Oregon. I urge you to support this bill to help farm owners continue their important work while fostering a greater connection between the public and agricultural communities.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely, Sydney