



March 6, 2025

Re: SB 788 – OPPOSE

Senate Committee on Natural Resources & Wildfire

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

Friends of the Columbia Gorge (“Friends”) is a non-profit organization with approximately 5,000 members. Friends is dedicated to protecting and enhancing the scenic, cultural, recreation, and natural resources of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area (“Gorge”).

Friends opposes SB 788, which poses a threat to Oregon’s farmland by allowing land zoned for exclusive farm use (“EFU”) to be used as a wedding or event venue in counties east of the Cascades and with populations of less than 90,000. This bill would grant broad permission to host such events with no limits on the number of people and vehicles allowed to be present.

Oregon’s current laws regarding agri-tourism already allow for commercial activities and events on land zoned for EFU, making this an unnecessary addition to existing allowed uses on farmland. These laws include protections for farmland that require that any events be “incidental and subordinate to existing farm use.” Additionally, they provide limits on the number of people and vehicles that can be present at each event and list out a specific set of requirements that must be complied with for each event.

It is crucial that we protect Oregon’s farmlands. This bill would result in further loss of active farmland, as some of these lands would be converted into wedding venues, event spaces, and parking areas for these events in lieu of being used for farming purposes. Farmers would then have to compete with wedding and event businesses to purchase farmland, driving up costs, and creating additional barriers to small farmers in eastern Oregon. It would also increase traffic on already strained rural roads, heighten wildfire risks, and put additional pressure on water resources.

Please oppose SB 788 and protect Eastern Oregon’s farmland.

Sincerely,
Madison Kenney
Conservation Organizer