

Submitter: Matt and Jennifer Van Wey

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1578

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 1578. I urge you to vote "no" on this bill.

As a farmer, farm owner and employer in Clackamas County, I am exhausted that yet another attempt to dismantle the protections of our land use system and UGB's is being considered. The process for cities to expand their UGB and convert working farm and forestland to housing should not be undermined as this bill proposes to do. Taking more working land out of production and creating islands of urban development degrades the quality and viability of the agricultural economy. As a first generation farmer, I know acutely how difficult it is to find affordable farmland for young and beginning farmers. This bill would increase the cost of EFU land, as well as taking EFU land out of production. Reducing development restrictions, such as allowing more ADUs in EFU land, also drives the cost of farm land up. If we want a viable, even thriving local farm economy in Oregon, we need to start considering protections instead of constantly whittling away at them.

SB 1578 authorizes rural counties to rezone up to 50 acres of working lands for urban development without considering impacts on agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, water supplies or wildfire risk. It also expands the authorization for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) used by cities to increase urban densities into the exclusive farm use zone.

Spot zoning pockets of urban development outside cities and towns with urban infrastructure is costly, difficult to serve, and leads to a sprawling development pattern requiring increased vehicle miles traveled.

Scattering islands of urban development throughout the state's working agricultural and forest land unnecessarily converts valuable working lands for sprawling residential

development. It also introduces conflicts between residential use and agriculture and forestry into the midst of our working lands, cutting into these industries' bottom line.

Allowing opportunities for increased residential development on working lands also drives up land prices out of the reach of farmers, ranchers and forest land managers, making it difficult for the next generation to start-up and expand their operations.

Protecting Oregon's farms, ranches, forests, and other natural resources, while focusing housing growth where infrastructure already exists, is both possible and essential. I urge you to reject SB 1578.

Thank you for considering my comments and allowing this opportunity for public input.