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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 strongly urge you to vote **no** on this bill.

I serve as the Executive Director of Gorge Grown Food Network, based in Hood River. Our mission is to build a resilient, inclusive local food system that improves the health and well-being of our community. We directly support more than 250 local producers each year, and the long-term protection of farmland is fundamental to our work.

I strongly oppose SB 1578 because it would allow unlimited pockets of urban-density housing on already-limited farmland while bypassing Oregon's proven land use planning system. The bill fails to meaningfully account for impacts on agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, water availability, and wildfire risk. It also expands authorization for large accessory dwelling units, effectively pushing urban residential density into the Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zone.

This bill would significantly weaken farmland protections that have safeguarded Oregon's working lands for decades. While affordable housing is critical - and in the Columbia Gorge housing development is occurring in urban centers where infrastructure and services exist - scattering residential development across agricultural and forest lands is the definition of sprawl. It increases land-use conflicts and further polarizes rural communities already strained by development pressure, agritourism, and ADU siting.

Hood River County already has the most expensive farmland in Oregon. SB 1578 would accelerate land price inflation, putting farmland even further out of reach for farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers, particularly the next generation.

Oregon does not need to sacrifice its farmland to address housing needs. I urge you to reject SB 1578.

Sincerely,  
Sarah Sullivan, Executive Director

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