

February 10, 2026

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. Please vote "no" on this bill.

I oppose SB 1578. I grew up in California but have lived in Oregon since 1984. I live in a rural area on the edge of Portland, where we still have valuable farmland and invaluable natural resources. I've seen the harm that poorly regulated development can do to agricultural lands in both states, and have long been proud that Oregon has protected most of its rural lands from inappropriate development.

This bill would allow unlimited patches of urban-density housing that ignores our thoughtful Oregon land use laws and state goals on invaluable agricultural and forest lands. This would expose more of Oregon's forests and farms, natural resources and rural communities to inappropriate and harmful development.

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) into the exclusive farm use (EFU) zone – this will result in more good quality agricultural land being converted into recreational homes and vacation properties.

As our climate warms and becomes less predictable, we need to preserve Oregon's agricultural lands to grow food, not vacation rental homes. We don't need more homes in areas with high wildfire risk.

Zoning pockets of urban development outside cities and towns results in development that is costly, difficult to serve, and results in sprawling developments where people must drive everywhere because transit can't economically serve sprawl. Infrastructure is exorbitantly expensive even within new urban areas and is even more expensive in small pockets like this, so you don't get affordable housing, you get vacation homes and rentals for the wealthy.

Fifty acre islands of urban development scattered across the state's agricultural and forest lands would convert high value working lands into sprawling residential development. It would increase conflicts between residential uses and agriculture and forestry, increasing social and economic burdens on farmers and foresters, making it harder for them to buy land and maintain profitable businesses.

Please protecting Oregon's farms, ranches, forests, and other natural resources. We need to focus urban development and new housing where infrastructure already exists to ensure it is affordable and can be served by transit. Please vote to reject SB 1578.

Thank you for your consideration.

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