

Submitter: David Williams
On Behalf Of: Preserving agricultural land and wildlife
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586

Dear Chair Broadman. Members of the committee

I have lived in unincorporated Washington County for 29 yrs. I strongly oppose any use of the rezoning powers of SB 1586 to bring in farmland for Hillsboro or any other attempt to skirt and undermine Oregon's land use planning system at the request of a few large landowners and big business.

For 23 years I served as the State Director for the USDA-Wildlife Services program, a federal service agency that assists farmers manage wildlife conflicts throughout Oregon in a biologically sound and socially acceptable manner. To do so I had the privilege to work with the Oregon Departments of Agriculture & ODFW, along with the US Fish & Wildlife Service on many complex and at times controversial wildlife management decisions. Often many long public hearings were held to ensure ample public input and demonstrate that public agencies and decision makers did their due diligence in matters that affected the natural and human environments. What I've observed regarding SB 1586 is no effort by Sen Sollman to gather testimony from her constituents who's jobs, families, and community will be negatively impacted. Shame on the Senator. She lacks appreciation for how farmers are an integral part of a community's fabric and local wildlife populations. SB 1586 as is being proposed is taking a myopic, biased, and overly optimistic view, of the benefits of the proposal by placing more importance on short term economic numbers that can be spun versus the long term community benefits of keeping people and local economies connected to agriculture. Industrial growth should occur on industrial land not in the middle of farmland and associated communities and local wildlife populations.

If not for Oregon's Agriculture the volatility of State and local economies would be much greater. Here in Washington Co. we have seen what happens when there are economic downturns; we get Big layoffs from our biggest corporate employers who have benefitted from huge tax breaks from the State and local municipalities. During economic downturns Oregon's agriculture and the associated small businesses keep chugging along contributing to communities. Oregon's agriculture is not the sexy, generational opportunity that the "silicon forest" is being portrayed as by supporters of converting valuable farmland, it has consistently been here for every generation of Oregonian. Once farmland is converted the gift that Oregonians and wildlife have been blessed with is gone forever. Washington Co. farmland's importance to wildlife is not limited to local wildlife species it is critical to many bird species that migrate along the Pacific Flyway!

Now more than ever it is time to invest not divest in Oregon's agriculture. Without farmers there can be no farmers' markets. Farmer markets are important to communities, they bring people together, other small businesses attend and benefit, and people really care about where their food and fiber come from! Farmland sequesters carbon, returns water to the aquifer, and feeds humans and wildlife, while industrial land generates carbon emissions and only extracts water from the aquifer. The proposed action will also require additional utilities to be constructed which increase the utility costs and taxes for residents in Washington County. Hence, proposed non-agricultural enterprises should reuse/repurpose existing land that has already been taken out of agricultural production.

We should be supporting existing and future farmers not undervaluing their contributions. Less than 2% of our population produces the abundant, wholesome, affordable food we and the rest of the world enjoys. We shouldn't make their job harder by eliminating or fragmenting land set aside for producing food & fiber for now and in the future!

Please vote NO on SB 1586.