

Submitter: Emily Chenoweth

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586

My name is Emily Chenoweth, and I'm submitting testimony in opposition to SB 1586.

I'm writing for personal reasons and political ones. Personally, this bill threatens the farmers I know and rely on—people who have fed my family for years through community supported agriculture. Politically, SB 1586 is a bad precedent and a bad trade for Oregon.

My concerns are:

1. It bypasses the local public process.

A change of this scale normally requires multiple public meetings, detailed analysis of public costs (roads, water, sewer, emergency services), and a clear local consensus about what “economic development” should look like. None of that has happened here. For decades, the understanding was that this land would remain rural until 2065, and farmers and local businesses made long-term decisions based on that certainty. SB 1586 overrides that public planning framework to benefit a small set of landowners inside the 1,700 acres and their lobbyist—people who stand to make enormous profits from selling this land.

2. It invites the wrong kind of development.

The bill's language leaves room for large-scale data centers as long as they're “accessory” to another use. That's a loophole. Data centers deliver few jobs and don't justify the public costs of expanding the urban footprint. If the goal is industrial growth, Hillsboro already has land available for data centers without sacrificing prime farmland.

3. We should use the industrial land we already have.

Oregon has significant industrial land inside existing urban growth boundaries, including hundreds of acres near this site. Hillsboro has had years to attract high-job employers but has instead filled much of its industrial land with data centers and warehouses. Before the state forces an expansion onto farmland, we should have an accurate statewide industrial lands inventory and a real strategy to invest in and ready the land we've already set aside.

4. The farmland loss is permanent—and it harms an existing industry.

This area includes Class I and Class II soils—some of the best farmland in the world and a scarce resource in the Willamette Valley. Once it's converted, it's gone. And because this land helps connect Washington County's farm country, losing it doesn't just hurt individual farms; it risks weakening the broader agricultural economy that depends on contiguous, functioning farm landscapes.

For these reasons, I urge you to oppose SB 1586.

Thank you for your time and for your service.