

Submitter: James Loope

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586

Chair Broadman, Vice Chair McLane, and members of the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee,

My name is James Loope. I live in Washington County, Oregon. I'm an organic regenerative farmer, and I also work as a software engineer. I'm writing in strong opposition to SB 1586 and to any amendments that would expand Hillsboro's urban growth boundary (UGB) into rural reserves—whether that expansion is 1,700 acres or a smaller first step.

I oppose SB 1586 for three main reasons:

1) It breaks Oregon's promise to protect rural reserves until at least 2065, and it encourages speculation instead of farming.

In 2014, the Legislature committed that these rural reserves would be protected from urbanization until at least 2065. That stability matters. Farmers make long-term investments—soil building, drainage, fencing, perennial plantings, equipment, and marketing channels—that only make sense when we can plan decades ahead. Repeated attempts to pull this land into the UGB undermine that promise and push land toward speculative holding rather than productive agriculture. Once that cycle starts, it gets harder for working farmers (especially new and expanding farms) to access land at farmable prices.

2) Paving over top-tier farmland harms local food security, the agricultural economy, and climate resilience.

These are not “empty acres”—they are some of the best soils in the world. On my farm, I see first-hand how healthy soils increase soil infiltration, reduce runoff, and store carbon and water. Converting prime farmland to industrial use permanently removes that capacity. It also weakens the surrounding agricultural economy: farms rely on nearby infrastructure—mechanics, fabricators, irrigation suppliers, seed/soil services, and processors. When farmland is fragmented and priced out, those supporting businesses shrink or disappear, and the whole local food system becomes more brittle.

3) The bill is not a credible path to “good jobs,” and it creates an obvious loophole for data center build out.

Hillsboro has already consumed large amounts of industrial land in recent years, much of it for data centers—projects that are land- and energy-intensive and do not employ many people once built. SB 1586 claims to prohibit “stand-alone” data

centers, but still allows data centers as an accessory use without clear limits on size or share of a development. That is not meaningful protection. If Oregon is going to trade away irreplaceable farmland, the Legislature should at minimum demand clear accountability: transparent job outcomes, wage standards, and enforceable limits on land- and resource-intensive uses.

I'm also deeply concerned by reports of expected amendments that would (1) immediately bring hundreds of acres into the UGB and (2) convert a larger area of rural reserves into urban reserves. That approach would further erode trust and bypass the normal land use process and public engagement that Oregonians rely on.

What I want instead:

If Oregon needs more industrial capacity, we should start with statewide, fact-based planning and better use of land already inside UGBs—such as a statewide industrial lands inventory, industrial land readiness funding for sites within existing UGBs, and stronger requirements tying public benefits (including any tax incentives) to verified outcomes like family-wage jobs. Oregon should not pit tech and agriculture against each other by sacrificing the state's second-largest economic sector and the soils that make it possible.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to vote NO on SB 1586 and reject any amendment that expands Hillsboro's UGB into rural reserves. Thank you for your time and for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,  
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