

Sunday, February 15, 2026

RE: Testimony in Opposition to SB 1586

Chair Broadman, members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 1586. As a Willamette Valley farmer and an Oregonian, I am writing to express my strong opposition to this bill.

As a farmer, I understand the value of these irreplaceable soils. My home farm in Yamhill County adjacent to Washington County has far inferior soils, and we would be grateful to own or manage land like that in the 1,700 acres with Class 1 and 2 soils. Only 2% of Oregon has soil of this caliber, and much of it has been paved already under the cities of Portland, Hillsboro, Springfield, and Eugene.

I have heard it said that because the land is unirrigated it is unproductive. That could not be farther from the truth. Like much of the 1,700 acres that would be urbanized by this bill, our farm is unirrigated. Yet we farm and rent out about 250 acres for crops including hazelnuts, grass seed, clover seed, and winter wheat – none of which require irrigation. Hazelnuts are in fact one of the most financially lucrative crops grown in Oregon at this time. The combination of soils and climate on these 1700 acres make the land excellent for agriculture, with or without irrigation.

I am also concerned about the harm that high intensity industrial uses on this land will have on surrounding agricultural land. Agriculture is also an industry, and it is an industry that is greatly affected by neighboring activities. High tech or data center uses nearby would make it difficult to move equipment on busy roads. It would also hinder neighboring farmers' ability to spray chemical production products without complaint from incompatible neighbors. At the same time, the water effluent from data centers is known to have high concentrations of PFAs, which cause health issues and reside in the soil and products grown on it forever. Having a neighboring industry that pays many magnitudes more per acre than agricultural land values will create a speculation bubble that will make it difficult or impossible for neighboring farmers to buy land at agricultural value.

And very importantly, having state and Metro governments who are willing to upend a promise for 50 years of certainty for an unarticulated and highly speculative plan creates great uncertainty for agriculture throughout the region. I value the rule of law. This land was guaranteed to remain in Rural Reserve for 50 years until 2065. Farmers in the surrounding area made decisions and investments in their land and businesses in reliance on that guarantee. If that promise can be upended without even a demonstration of need for a new industry or an accounting of the cost of infrastructure to this vast greenfield, I fear that there would be nothing to stop expansion all the way to the coast range on our last and best farmland. The loss of certainty and connectivity in this agricultural region as a result of this decision could cause auxiliary agricultural businesses like mechanics and seed cleaners to close. This will have ripple

effects on agriculture throughout the region and could seriously erode agricultural viability in the northwest Willamette Valley.

As an Oregonian, I value sound public process. That has been absent from this bill. There have been no public hearings in the local community about the decision to expand Hillsboro's size by 11%. Those decisions normally have public input and testimony and time to actually consider it. In this hearing, we are asked to testify to a bill despite rumors that an amendment to the bill will be released and that amendment has not yet been posted. It is difficult to determine what I am testifying to – the bill itself or the promise of a different bill that will still have many similar flaws.

It is also clear that this request for land is a solution in search of a problem. Hillsboro has 500 unbuilt industrial acres just to the east of the 1,700 acres, and underutilized intel campuses inside its boundaries. Oregon has 10,000 unbuilt industrial acres. There has been no justification for why land is a limiting factor for advanced manufacturing, or a recognition that land and soil are necessary factors of agriculture. I understand that advanced manufacturing had not been a focus of Hillsboro's economic development vision until this bill arose, and that the federal definition of "advanced manufacturing" was modified in July of 2025 to include data centers. I also understand that the bill has a loophole that could allow unlimited data centers on the land. I am concerned that the bill's proponents are not being upfront with how the land would be used and using the bill's language and associated definitions to conceal the true outcomes.

I ask the legislature to reject this bill. It would have irreparable consequences for agriculture in my region, it has been developed through a deficient public process, and land is not a demonstrated need for urban industries in the state.

Respectfully,
David McAdams
Gaston, Oregon farmer