



P.O Box 1083
McMinnville, OR 97128

February 12, 2014

Helping to shape the use of our natural resources to protect the quality of life in Yamhill County.

Senate Rural Communities & Economic Development Committee
Salem, OR 97301

Re: SB 1578

Dear Chair Roblan and Committee members:

Friends of Yamhill County (FYC) works to protect natural resources through the implementation of land use planning goals, policies, and laws that maintain and improve the present and future quality of life in Yamhill County. Our members include farmers, foresters, vintners, and many other urban and rural residents. We strongly oppose SB 1578.

- SB 1578 threatens our most productive farmland by allowing cities and counties to circumvent the long-standing protections that have made agriculture a major factor in Oregon's economy. Farmers need a land use system that protects farmland for farm use, minimizes speculative pressures on the price of farmland and limits conflicting non-farm uses.

Cities can already provide for future industrial needs on farmland under existing law. Every urban reserve in state history, including Newberg, Metro, Ontario, and the Rogue Valley/Bear Creek cities has included farmland. SB 1578 would greatly weaken the standard of review. There are no criteria in the bill that limit siting. Cities and counties do not have the expertise, the interest, or the motivation to properly develop and apply criteria.

- The shortage of industrial lands that some cities assert is a problem of their own making. Newberg has re-zoned hundreds of acres of prime industrial land served by rail and highway to retail commercial and single-family subdivisions. Keizer squandered its prime rail-served industrial land at the I-5 interchange on a mega-big-box center. Both cities now assert that they need even more prime farmland to replace what they have squandered. Presently McMinnville is being pressured by a big-box developer so that it can justify rezoning prime industrial land for retail.
- Under SB 1578, once siting is approved by the city or the county, *all* state agencies and local governments *must* issue all permits, licenses and certificates

necessary for the construction and operation of the facility. Furthermore, public bodies are *required* to make all services (including water, sewer and transportation) available for the construction and operation of the facility.

SB 1578 thus allows private industry to hijack public funds, and, by requiring ODOT to give ‘first priority’ to serving these sites, it allows local governments to hijack state funds.

A streamlined process may be appropriate for land that is *already* within a UGB and zoned industrial. Planning for those lands has *already* had robust public involvement opportunities and it should be relatively easy to locate a conforming use on that land. That is *not* the case with the huge-impact projects that would be “super-sited” under this bill.

SB 1578 offers an empty promise- that more empty land will grow jobs by attracting new, large employers. The vast majority of new jobs are created by small employers who are already here. Adequate infrastructure and an educated work force are what really matters. Oregon should be growing jobs close-in, where people already live and where transit is often available. Instead, SB 1578 will undercut our thriving agricultural industry by allowing “super-siting” to usurp the land base on which it relies.

The bill will create a race to the bottom. It doesn’t even pay lip service to existing industrial land supplies. In other words, super-siting can occur on farmland north of Keizer or outside Woodburn, even though there is already serviced land in the Salem UGB at Mill Creek.

Please vote NO vote on SB 1578.

Sincerely,

Tom Abrego
Friends of Yamhill County