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February 23, 2015

## **Testimony in Opposition to SB 25 Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee**

Chair Edwards, members of the Committee:

Friends of Family Farmers offers this testimony in opposition to SB 25, a bill which would allow certain rural counties with no population growth to operate outside of statewide land use planning goals.

We are concerned that this bill poses a potentially significant threat to agricultural lands across eastern Oregon and potentially other rural areas in the state. For over 40 years, Oregon's land use system has helped protect farmland and rural quality of life, while ensuring citizen involvement in land use decisions that affect these values.

While this bill seeks to boost rural economic development, which is an important goal, dispensing with statewide planning goals like protection of agricultural lands and citizen involvement is not an appropriate way to achieve this goal. SB 25 could lead to irreversible loss of productive farm and rangeland in certain eastern Oregon counties, and put them at risk of being converted to poorly planned subdivisions or industrial development that are not compatible with working farms and ranches.

In order to maintain Oregon agriculture into the future, we need to ensure that agricultural lands are protected from development, and can be passed on to a new generation of farmers and ranchers. Under SB 25, local land use rules will vary by county, which could create significant fluctuation in agricultural land prices, making it difficult or impossible for working farm and ranch lands to stay in production, and make it particularly difficult on younger producers to transition into farm or ranch ownership.

Further, if counties approve uses or developments that are incompatible with agricultural uses, or in areas subject to natural hazards like range or forest fires, there is an increased risk of conflict and greater pressure on farm and ranch operations.

We urge you to oppose SB 25 and work to ensure continued protection for Oregon's farm and ranch lands. Thank you for your consideration.

Ivan Maluski  
Policy Director