

Date: April 6, 2015

To: Chair Edwards and Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Re: SB 716

From: Carol Chesarek, on behalf of Forest Park Neighborhood Association  
13300 NW Germantown Road  
Portland, OR 97231

Chair Edwards and Members of the Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about SB 716. I live in Portland's Forest Park Neighborhood, which includes the 5000+ acre Forest Park and a broad swath of the Tualatin Mountains in western Multnomah County. We oppose SB 716.

In 2007, my neighborhood started working with Rep. Greenlick and then Senator Avakian on SB 1011 to authorize Urban and Rural Reserves in the Portland area. I testified at the SB 1011 hearings, and I served on Multnomah County's Reserves Citizen Advisory Committee. SB 1011 and last year's HB 4078 were supported by a regional consensus, which SB 716 lacks. SB 1011 also required regional agreement on reserves decisions.

Our neighborhood residents worked very hard for 3+ years to ensure that our Natural Features and important Farm and Forestry lands were designated as Rural Reserves. We were successful, largely because of current County Chair (then County Commissioner) Deborah Kafoury's support and deep citizen participation.

We were highly motivated because our neighborhood is adjacent to the UGB and had to be studied every 5 years for UGB expansion, even though the land is unsuitable for urban development. We were tired of fighting the UGB and wanted long term protection for our regionally significant natural resources. The Rural Reserves promised to provide 50 years of protection from urbanization.

SB 716 would eliminate that protection, allowing a single county, acting alone, to undesignated or redesignate Rural Reserves, or to put them into Industrial Reserves. People in my neighborhood, who invested so much time and effort to achieve our Rural Reserves, feel betrayed by SB 716.

A core premise of SB 1011 was regional cooperation and consensus on both the problem and the solution. Regional agreement was also required for the Reserves decisions -- no single local government could act alone.

The metro region invested several years in detailed analysis and public process to reach that regional consensus on Reserves designations. Many state agencies

provided input, including ODOT, ODA, ODF and ODF&W. Hundreds of citizens testified at hearings held by four governments.

Reserves promised to provide long-term certainty for urban infrastructure planning to ensure efficient investment of taxpayer funds, and to provide long term protection from urbanization for farming, forestry, and natural features. Farmers agreed to give up some foundation quality Farmland in exchange for certainty for the remainder. Rural Reserves were supposed to be protected from urbanization for 50 years. But they'd lose that protection under SB 716. This bill would eliminate certainty for urban planning too.

There's no regional consensus behind this bill, either about the problem or the solution. SB 716 would:

- allow a single county to undo regional Urban and Rural Reserve designations, completely undermining all Reserves decisions made by the region;
- shift decisions about these future industrial areas from Metro to an individual county, fragmenting decisions about urban growth and removing checks and balances – but counties don't have the analytical tools or objectivity that Metro provides;
- break the regional consensus model that has underpinned the entire reserves process;
- break all the promises of Urban and Rural Reserves, and void all that work.

Implementing a measure that so broadly undermines regional Reserves decisions and Metro's authority over urban growth without a regional consensus supporting it is a terrible idea. It breaks faith with all the citizens who invested so much time and effort in the Reserves Process.

If you feel there is a need for more industrial land in the metro area, there are better solutions. I'm sure Metro and the counties would be happy to work together on a package of legislation that would be far more effective than this bill, and that would not undo years of hard work done by the region.

Please do not pass this bill out of committee.

I would also ask that in the future, that you not support legislation that would modify urban and rural reserves in the Portland area unless there is a regional consensus behind it.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would be happy to answer any questions.



Carol Chesarek

Forest Park Neighborhood Board Member