

Dear Committee Chair Chris Edwards,

I urge the Senate Environment Committee to OPPOSE House Bill 2509.

HB 2509 creates a significant and unnecessary obstacle for farmers facing crop damage as a result of transgenic contamination. The bill also would directly impair the ability of Oregon county farmers to enforce ordinances, like Jackson County Ordinance 635.

There are at least 4 big problems with HB 2509:

1. Forced mediation. HB 2509 would effectively force farmers whose crops were contaminated by GE crops into a vague “mediation process” orchestrated by the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA) before a farmer could go to court to sue to try to stop GE contamination. Farmers can already use mediation if it makes sense, but they should not be forced into a biased “mediation” process controlled by staunch GE supporters at the ODA.
2. Liability for farmers contaminated by GE crops. If a farmer refused to mediate, HB 2509 says they could be liable for hundreds of thousands of dollars in a GE grower’s attorney’s fees in a related court case. AND if Monsanto or their ilk joined the case, the farmer could even be liable for their attorney fees.
3. Pro-GE mediators. HB 2509’s mediation process would be orchestrated by the State agency that has done more to defend agricultural biotech interests than any other: the Oregon Dept. of Agriculture (ODA). ODA could then create a costly and time consuming mediation process that would make it harder for farmers to protect themselves against GE contamination.
4. Funding for OSU propaganda. The bill would also direct propaganda funding to OSU for “educational materials and information regarding the coexistent use of agricultural lands.” The bill would put OSU, which has a long history of promoting GE organisms, in the position of using Monsanto’s talking points that GE crops can “co-exist” with organic and other organic and traditional crops despite the dramatic contamination events and billions in damage that GE contamination continue to cause to traditional crops.

Please oppose HB 2509.

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