

May 21, 2015

Re: HB 3549

Dear Rules Committee,

Thank you so much for inviting us to come here to talk to you all about such an important issue to farmers and Oregonians in this state. My name is Brenda Frketich and I am a third generation farmer from St. Paul. On our 1000 acre sustainable farm we raise grass seed, hazelnuts, wheat, clover, vegetables, and vegetables seeds.

I am in favor of House Bill 3549. It's not often that bills come up that truly are working to make farmers and foresters better. But this bill I think has that intention in mind. After a rigorous work group went after some of these issues, it was found that the Oregon Department of Agriculture needs more tools and resources, and I couldn't agree more. As a licensed applicator I not only spray all types of pesticides in a safe manner on my crops, I also attend countless hours of training and education about what I'm spraying. There is no lack of effort on my part I can assure you. I have pesticide labels saved in my phone for a quick resource; I constantly am in touch with experts who can guide me when I have concerns or questions. I say all of this, knowing that I am not alone. I believe that the agricultural industry here in Oregon is full of responsible farmers who do their due diligence when taking care of their crops.

We also take careful notes and keep extensive records. If you asked me what I sprayed 6 years ago on a field just across the road from our home place, in a matter of minutes I could tell you the dates of applications, what was applied, and the EPA registration number. This information is already mandated to be kept for 2 years, but I know many farmers keep them for much longer. If there was ever a problem, I would expect the ODA to come knocking at my door, and I am fully prepared to take responsibility for what we have used as tools in our toolbox to take care of our crops and grow healthy food and fiber.

I understand that there are bad actors in all industries. I think it's unfortunate, but all we can do is work to make the tools that help mitigate that better. For instance the hotline to report a pesticide issue and further funding to help investigate problems if they arise is an essential step in the right direction. Even increasing civil penalties seems like a reasonable request.

I am speaking you today as a farmer, as a business owner and someone whose family livelihood rests on the shoulders of markets I can't control and weather I pray turns out. But I'm also speaking to you today as a daughter, as a wife, and as a mom. And I think none of those roles plays more highly on my radar as that of mom to a 1 year old little boy, with number 2 currently on the way. I say this because as a rural resident, I am surrounded by fields that are sprayed multiple times a year. And I still feel safe in my home, my son still plays outside, and we breathe fresh country air. Pesticides that are sprayed are done in such a careful manner in agriculture, with such high regulations; I truly believe that I'm safe in the country surrounded by farms and agriculture. It might be hard to believe, but we really do study how long a chemical stays on the crop, when employees can re-enter the area, and the types of PPE that are

required for safety. These aren't merely suggestions, these are how farmers spray and handle chemicals because it's the best way to keep everyone safe.

So with all this safety talk, wouldn't more regulations and more reporting make pesticides even safer? I don't think so. We are highly regulated right now; I spoke before about the hours and hours of education that we receive on a yearly basis. Not to mention the amount of record keeping that is already being done. In my mind, if someone has a concern, the rules are in place now to get the information about what has been applied. If we were required to report those applications I would be very concerned about the safety of my farm. Acts of terrorism have been happening to farms across this state already regarding other hot topics such as GMOs. I would hate to open up my doors to people who wish to cause my farm any kind of harm; information in the wrong hands does no one any good.

I would urge you to support this bill as it came out of the work group. Support more tools for the ODA to help farmers be better farmers. Help them find ways to help foresters be better foresters. In agriculture we are an industry that is always changing and learning. I can't say that what we are doing now is perfect, because how can that be true. Farming is a constant experiment of expertise, knowledge, risk, honoring our past while looking to continue our legacy. We are not a stagnant industry, so to give us more regulations isn't the simple answer. We need people who can help us become better at what we are doing while not regulating us out of farming this wonderful soil.

Thank you so much for your consideration in this very important issue.

Brenda Frketch