



KIRSCH

Family Farms, Inc.

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February 8, 2016

House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness

Re: HB 4122

Chair Fagan and members of the committee,

My name is Brenda Frketich and I am a third generation farmer in St. Paul, Oregon. I grow perennial ryegrass, tall fescue, hazelnuts, vegetables, vegetable seeds, wheat and clover on my 1000 acre farm.

I'm here to testify today against HB 4122 a bill that would not only hurt me as a young farmer here in Oregon, but it would also hurt the legacy that generations of Oregon farmers have worked to cultivate. I testified in support of Seed Preemption, a bill that when passed gave me a sigh of relief. I felt like it really showed that the Oregon legislature was serious about allowing us to continue farming in Oregon to the best of our ability, while putting emotion aside on issues such as the growing of GMO seeds and products. It left the decisions of what we can grow to state and federal levels, not to underfunded, under researched and over pressured levels of governments, such as counties and cities.

I am against this bill today for many of the same reasons I was for getting seed preemption in this state just a few short years ago. The four main reasons I am here today, I'm sure will be echoed by many of my farmer counterparts. Firstly, removing the GMO provision in the law would open the door the just the type of county and city regulation that we are afraid of. Secondly, farms reach across county lines and across city lines. We already have in place mechanisms and agencies that regulate us on many levels. And lastly we really don't need more regulations that inhibit a farmer's ability to farm

While I don't personally grow any GMO crops on our farm, you may think that I would be indifferent to this certain bill changing the current law. However as a farmer in an industry that is ever changing, where obstacles and pests are at a constant advantage, I know that looking to technology is going to become more and more important in the years to come. As farmers we take risks every day, most of those are associated with forces that our out of our hands. The weather, markets, pests are just a few that make a huge impact on farmers here in Oregon. So my toolbox of how to fight and work with these issues is something that I'm always wanting to expand. GMO or GE crops, I can see as something that will potentially help me as a producer in the future. While I see it as a science that needs to be continually monitored and looked at scientifically, I feel that removing this portion of the bill, would make my future ability to work with these technologies very diminished in the future.

If we begin to have local government setting regulations this would very quickly create a nightmare for me as a producer. Not only do some of our farms reach through more than one county, but we also farm in different towns. Can you imagine being regulated on what you can grow in one town and not the same in another? In the area that I live specifically, we farm on the border of 3 towns. One of our farms is actually on two different tax lots, in two different towns. It would be a logistical disaster and not just for me as a farmer, but also for manufacturers, and distributors as well! Beyond that our over 400 local city governments and 36 counties would feel the financial stress of taking care of these incredibly large, complex, and scientific issues that would come before them. I know that my small town of St. Paul, population 322, does not have near the resources to be making decisions based on what crops we can and cannot grow there! I also fear that a lack of funding will create room for emotional decisions to be made that are not based on science.

Federally we already have in place the USDA, EPA, and FDA to regulate for example genetically engineered crops. While on the state side we have the ODA to do their due diligence in working with state specific situations. These are funded departments that have the expertise, financial backing and research to take on these large issues! They also have the ability and the means for enforcement if it's necessary.

In a recent survey done by the American Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers it was shown that the second highest concern for young farmers today was burdensome government regulations and "red tape." As a young farmer when I filled out that survey, I put that as my number one concern because I know that the potential for future regulation at even lower level of governments is out there and is very scary.

To be honest coming back to the farm, I had no idea how hard I would have to fight to continue farming in Oregon. As a mom with two small kids, as a small business owner, as a farmer, quite frankly I don't have the time to be here today to tell you all the reasons that I don't want county by county regulations. That's why I worked so hard alongside many agricultural groups to get seed preemption passed because I felt so threatened by what was happening. And now we are back, defending what to me seems like a common sense approach. After three generations my family is here to stay, unless bills like this continue to legislate me into a corner that as a farmer even this great soil can't bail me out of. I look forward to when we can call our farm a century farm, I look forward to watching my sons grow up playing in the same fields that I did. And I look forward to being able to do that in a state that stands up and protects us farmers and makes a statement that they support all agriculture, because that is what seed preemption does.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,



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