



February 8, 2016

Representative Shemia Fagan, Chair
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Efficiency
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4122 - Local Authority on Seed Regulation

Dear Chair Fagan and Members of the Committee:

The Oregon Cattlemen's Association ("OCA") is the voice of the cattle industry in Oregon. We represent ranchers throughout Oregon and aim to help grow Oregon's beef industry while promoting environmentally and socially sound economic practices. Oregon has over 13,000 cattle producers, using 57% of state agricultural lands and comprising 14% of Oregon's total agricultural sector. Consistent, reasonable and thoughtful regulation to the crops our cattle consume is critical in ensuring Oregon beef reaches tables across the globe safely and efficiently.

HB 4122 undermines the current state seed preemption law enacted by the legislature in 2013. It allows counties and cities to regulate the genetically engineered (GE) agricultural seed and crops planted within their jurisdictions. Eliminating this type of seed from the state preemption program creates several risks for livestock producers.

Of most pressing concern to OCA, HB 4122 contains an emergency clause, potentially allowing counties to take immediate action in regulating crops, and thereby ranchers' fields and pastures. Ranchers often graze cattle in pastures containing perennial crops like alfalfa, ryegrass or clover. HB 4122, if passed, could force many producers to tear up crops that are already planted, resulting in a total loss for them with no compensation. GE seed is often a large upfront investment that farmers recoup by the lower input costs over the life of the crop. If a farmer is forced to remove that crop, as many local measures have proposed, it could result in significant losses for those growers. Further, it would require producers to scramble to find adequate alternatives for feeding animals that don't require overgrazing and meet the nutritional needs of their animals. For some feed crops, over 90% of the available seeds are GE, leaving few alternatives if those crops aren't available. HB 4122 creates a range of risks and potential expenses not just for primary growers, but for the livestock producers dependent on such crops.

OCA is also concerned with allowing each local entity to enact seed regulations, creating a patchwork of regulations across the state. Given the budgetary constraints on our local governments, we are concerned at the level of analysis and scientific scrutiny such regulations may have before enactment. The seed and other products we use to feed cattle, as well as the beef we produce, are currently regulated by the United States Department of Agriculture, the

Food and Drug Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency, all of which have the needed expertise and scientific data to make informed decisions on safety.

Finally, this patchwork of regulations will unduly burden producers on an individual level. Livestock and dairy producers determine which crops to plant based on what they need to feed their herds a nutritious, balanced diet. It is not uncommon for graze land and pastures to span across multiple county and city jurisdictions. Under this patchwork of local regulations, individual producers would be forced to contend with multiple regulations across their properties or purchase more expensive alternative forage products for an entire operation just to comply with one jurisdiction's ordinance or code.

Allowing individual counties and cities to regulate agricultural seed will subject livestock producers to unnecessary risk, and a statewide patchwork of regulations, potentially driving up the costs of producing beef and driving up their prices to Oregonians. Oregon's cattle ranchers are already facing a difficult competitive landscape both domestically and globally, and ask the legislature to carefully consider any additional burdens. We ask you to oppose HB 4122.

Thank you,

Jerome Rosa, Executive Director