



LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

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Stacy Kraker
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*Northwest Coalition for
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David Lively
Organically Grown Company

Susan Schechter
Provender Alliance

February 9, 2016

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness
ATTN: Victoria Cox
Re: Hearing on House Bill 4122

Dear Members of the Committee,

We urge you to support HB 4122. The State of Oregon has failed to protect farmers from unwanted contamination from genetically engineered crops, which leaves farmers vulnerable to economic damages and infringes on their rights to farm with traditional seeds. In 2013, SB 863 should never have been included in the legislative package which stripped local communities of these rights. In the subsequent two years, the Governor failed to meet his commitment to make substantive progress on GMO issues at the state level via the GMO Task Force and the Department of Agriculture.

Unwanted transgenetic contamination is a *very real* issue for Oregon farmers, particularly those who utilize organic practices, as the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) standards strictly prohibit organic operations from using genetically engineered organisms, and for those who have a vested interest in exports, as many nations in the world have banned the sale of genetically engineered crops. Oregon is unique in that we are one of the foremost regions in the world for growing vegetable seed and we are a strong exporter of agricultural products (e.g. wheat & alfalfa). Oregon is 5th in the nation in total organic acres (204,166 acres), with a 93% increase in acreage between 2008 and 2014; Oregon is 4th in the nation in organic farmgate sales, valued at \$237 million, a 52% increase between 2008 and 2014. Consumers in many markets increasingly have concern over GMO contamination, and will reject products if there is a threat of contamination, and many buyers are now instituting mandatory testing before buying products. Farmers wishing to grow traditional, GE-free crops bear the unfair burden of needing to implement extraordinary measures to prevent contamination of their land, crops, and seed stock from the risk of cross-pollination and cross-contamination from GE crops.

In the absence of a comprehensive statewide framework, voters and local governments should be able to address issues with genetically engineered crops in their communities in order to protect their local food systems, producers, and economies, and to determine their economic and agricultural future.

On behalf of the Oregon Organic Coalition, I wish these comments to be submitted as testimony for public hearing.

Stacy Ann Kraker
Chair, Oregon Organic Coalition

About the Oregon Organic Coalition

The OOC is a trade support organization, working to advance the development and growth of the organic industry and community in Oregon. The OOC consists of a wide array of key players in Oregon's organic industry who volunteer their time and energy—from farmers to wholesalers and processors, as well as organic certifiers, scientists, consumers and retailers. The OOC acts as an organizing body, providing direction and endorsement of activities in promotion of Oregon's organic trade, such as the re-enlivening of Organically Grown in Oregon Week (OGOW) every September and advocating for continued federal support for organic research at Oregon State University.

