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February 8, 2016

To: House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Effectiveness

Attn: Victoria Cox

Re: Hearing on House Bill 4122

Dear Committee Members:

Provender Alliance membership consists of retailers, manufacturers, brokers and distributors in the food industry that serves tens of thousands of Oregon consumers. On behalf of the members of Provender, I urge you to support HB 4122. Our members strongly believe it is imperative to protect Oregon communities from transgenic contamination of agricultural products. We believe that local communities have the right to protect their local food systems, their growers, their economies and the right to determine their own economic and agricultural futures. Genetically engineered (GE) contamination has extensive impacts for those who utilize organic practices.

Organic certification strictly prohibits the use of GE organisms, including seed to grow crops and forage to feed animals. Oregon organic agriculture has a strong international presence and much of the international community will reject products if there is a threat of GE contamination. This bill eases the economic burden on the organic community of Oregon by relieving the need for testing beyond ordinary requirements.

GE crops are patented by the seed companies that manufacture them. If an organic grower's crop is contaminated by pollen from GE crops, their crop becomes unsellable as organic and loses value, will be rejected in the international market, and cannot be used for replanting as it becomes an infringement of patented property.

The increased awareness of GE foods among consumers is also a very real economic concern because consumers are increasingly rejecting foods and other products that contain GE ingredients. Oregon Ballot Measure 92 in 2014 failed by the narrowest of margins. This should be a clear indication of growing consumer awareness and concern over GE foods on grocery store shelves.

Supporting this bill would send a strong message to those Oregon consumers who care about the food they serve to their families.

Please accept these comments as testimony for public hearing.

Susan Schechter
Executive Director
Provender Alliance