

Dear Chair Beyer and members of the Senate Committee on Business and Transportation,

I would like to register my strong opposition to proposed SB 1588, which would allow certain rural counties and other local governments to engage in land use planning without complying with Oregon land use planning goals.

This bill would undermine Oregon land use laws that have been responsible, in no small measure, in making Oregon one of the most attractive places to live in the US. Oregon land use laws were developed decades ago to protect the rural landscapes and values of our state from untrammelled development. These land use laws have sought to make urbanized and industrial/commercial economic development consistent with a vibrant agriculture and forest economy, while also ensuring a quality of life throughout the state that is the envy of people living in other states.

It is easy to argue that good land use policy, that preserves forests and agricultural land and that creates places where people really want to live, stifles growth. And it is easy to claim that land use policy is why some places suffer economically. It is convenient to claim that unfettered use of land for almost any activity by private owners will create jobs. It is also factually wrong and politically misleading to make these claims. Growth based on an "anything goes" land use policy is necessarily short-sighted and probably inequitable. It is not a basis for durable development.

I moved to rural Oregon, bringing my family and my 6 figure income, precisely because Oregon's land use laws have made it such a desirable place to live and raise a family. I am not alone. Each year for the past several years, Oregon has remained the number one destination for interstate moves. This is no coincidence. The newcomers bring knowledge, resources, and vibrancy to Oregon rather than taking it to some other state. Sensible, and responsible land use is a key reason this happens. The fact is that good land use contributes to sustainable jobs, growth and development.

At best this bill is misguided. At worst, this bill is simply a licence for developers and builders to ruin the rural, forested, and agricultural backbone of Oregon. As an economist, I know there are better ways than SB 1588 to achieve growth where it is needed. Please vote against it.

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