

I am against the passage of HB 2859. HB 2859 would dramatically increase costs for farmers, in a market where we have little or no control of prices to recoup our costs. We are a small family farm of about 100 acres, and have been farming the same land since 1926.

SB 101, passed in 1973, states in Section 1, paragraph 4, "EFU zoning as provided by law, substantially limits alternatives to the use of rural land and, with the importance of rural land to the public, justifies incentives and privileges offered to encourage owners of rural lands to hold such lands in EFU zones". In other words, with the land use restricted to farming, farms cannot generate the income per square foot as other businesses such as retail, professional or manufacturing. If the state is going to restrict the use of farmland, thus restricting the earnings, landowners cannot be expected to have the same tax obligations as non-EFU land. Furthermore, farms do not place the same burden on infrastructure (utilities, public safety, etc.) as urban or city development.

In addition, adding personal property tax to costly farm equipment that may be used only a short period during the year would be just another cost that farmers cannot absorb.

Agriculture is a top economic driver in the state, with a farm gate value of 5.7 billion (2015). 96.7% of the farms in the state are family owned.

Oregon's legislature continues to add costs to family farmers, with sick pay in the last session, and now proposing SB 2859 as well as SB 828 (predictable/flex scheduling), with no exemption for agriculture. Anyone who has any experience with farming knows schedules change as frequently as the weather (many times due to weather). Several years ago, Oregon passed Measure 37, and as Oregonians cried out for making sure our farmland was protected, passed measure 49. Now it is time for the legislature to back off with further costly legislative mandates and allow family farms to succeed. Quit passing legislation that threatens our ability to stay in business, when the law restricts our land use to farming.

Jon Laraway, President