

From: Val Blaha
To: [LRO](#)
Subject: Comments re: HB 2859
Date: Wednesday, March 01, 2017 10:46:46 AM

Dear House Revenue Committee Members,

I co-own a small farm in Yamhill county, and I just learned today about HB 2859. I'm very much disturbed to learn that the special assessments for farm use and farm home sites, as well as for farm-related personal property, might be ended.

My husband and I have owned our farm since 2002. It's a small farm where we've raised quality meats, including chickens, lamb, and currently raise grass-fed beef. We supply many families with their annual beef shares (quarter or half animal), and we are proud and pleased to be able to provide healthy, quality food, and also to help support other local farms and retail outlets like Wilco with our business purchases.

The farm use and farm home site tax assessments protect farm land by encouraging us to actively farm our land. Given Oregon property regulations, we can't subdivide and turn our land into smaller home sites, nor would we want to. We value Oregon's natural spaces, and we're proud to take care of our land which provides feed and habitat not only for our cattle, but also for an endangered butterfly species, and a threatened lupine species. We've also reforested several of the season creeks, which has increased year-round water retention on the land, and may be contributing to the return of salmon on Haskins Creek. We have received accolades for our stewardship, and the tax deferral helps us both preserve the species native to the land, and to provide farm products for our customers.

Our son turns 10 years old in 2 months, and will be 17 years old in 2024 when the tax deferrals would end, if HB 2859 passes. He has expressed an interest in carrying on with the farm, and if he chooses to do so, we hope that it will be financially viable for him. Unfortunately HB 2859 might eliminate that possibility. In addition to our farm, my husband and I are both self-employed (I teach music, and he runs a geo-spatial analysis company). It's very likely that if we lose the deferral, we'd have to sell the farm.

One thing we've been saddened and worried to witness in the last few years is an increase in local property crimes relating to meth use. It's my worry that taking away the farm tax deferral would lead to further problems by encouraging people to illegally house additional people on their land in order to pay mortgages and higher property taxes. Isn't it better to support legal farm businesses and farm home sites by helping with farm tax deferrals?

I encourage you to remove Sections 54, 59 and 60 from HB 2859, and to support continued farm tax deferrals for Oregon's farms.

Sincerely,

Valerie Blaha
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