

March 13, 2017

FROM: Penny Suess, PO Box 276, Port Orford, OR 97465 / 541-332-3017 /  
penny@net-gain.us  
TO: House Committee on Human Services and Housing, via e-mail  
RE: **HB 2937** and **HB 2938**

I am concerned about the impact these two bills will have on farmland on the southern Oregon coast. Allowing more nonfarm-type housing on Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) lands will take a toll on working farms in my area, as well as on the small towns here in north Curry County.

Farms are for farming, not for vacationing. Yet these bills would make it easier to rent out “accessory dwelling units” (ADUs) and even RVs as B&Bs or other short-term rentals. I don’t believe this is compatible with agricultural business use, and may tend to drive out farming altogether. And farming is one of the few businesses residents can rely on here.

We have already seen the effects of events such as the three-day Cape Blanco Country Music Festival, which was held for some years on farmland north of Port Orford. Excessive traffic, the stress on local law enforcement, noise, and other issues made an event of this size incompatible with community life. Imagine hundreds of RVs, campers, and “glamping” vehicles springing up overnight on farm fields. While originally welcomed here, the event came to be viewed as not worth the money it brought in. Which in any case was minimal and mostly confined to the concessions that the organizers themselves provided. The festival has now relocated to a more suitable site – one less remote and more able to accommodate it.

In addition, allowing such short-term rentals on farmland will have a negative impact on tourism-related businesses now located in and around the towns on the coast. Vacation rentals – in homes and RV parks – are important income-producing businesses in an area with no industry and few commercial opportunities. Increasing the potential for short-term rentals on farms will not help those currently in the tourism business.

Even if allowing ADUs on farmland is seen as providing affordable housing, it will be negative for surrounding communities. It makes much more sense to encourage affordable housing units within existing towns, which are already struggling, and where necessary utilities and services are already available.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposed legislation.