

Dear Members of the House Committee on Human Services and Housing:

I am writing in support of House Bill 2937, which comes before you for a public hearing this Tuesday, March 14. My wife, two children and I live on Sauvie Island, on a 5-acre parcel of EFU zoned land. Our neighbors are both small property owners who live on their land and garden or farm on a small scale, and large property owners who farm single crops and live elsewhere on the island. We have a small but expanding orchard and sell tree and cane fruit to local businesses in addition to having a CSA based on our land, and growing for our own consumption.

I see the challenges that small farmers face from a personal perspective, and find opposition to this measure, aimed at offering an opportunity for diversified income streams to families in rural areas, both misguided in its reasoning and mean spirited in its motivation. The Portland metropolitan area has prided itself on its urban growth boundary for several decades, and has done a great job of protecting rural land from large-scale development pressure. Sauvie Island is a perfect example of this, and its proximity to Portland has made it a lightning rod for conflicts about this pressure since the bridge was built. I will base my comments on my experience growing up visiting Sauvie Island with my mom to U-pick vegetables, and my experience living on the island as an adult

Much of the opposition to this bill will no doubt center on the impact that additional residents will have on traffic, and the risk that short-term rentals pose to the rural character of the Island. My view is that the two main sources of actual impact on the island are 1. visitors to the beaches on the northern and Columbia River side of the island and 2. the fall visitors several “industrial-scale” pumpkin patches and corn mazes. I believe this is borne out by an analysis of the traffic trips; it is certainly borne out by my and others’ experience living on the island throughout the year. Island residents do not cause traffic jams; they do not drive dangerously; they do not jeopardize farmers on tractors, they do not impede the flow of first responders. Additional residents living in ADUs will also not cause these problems. Realistically, any rule developed from the passage of this bill will limit the number of ADUs actually built on Sauvie Island to a very manageable number. It would also very easily be crafted to mitigate any impact an ADUs construction would have on prime farmland, another red herring argument from the opposition.

As to the rural character of land zoned EFU or MUA changing negatively through the passage of this bill, I find the argument specious. Farm land is not wilderness, and my neighbor – who, fully within his rights as a single property owner rips out hundreds of threatened Oregon White oaks to avoid turning the wheel of his tractor more often - does more to destroy rural character, harm wildlife and in the long term undermine the productivity of his land than an ADU or even a hundred ADs could ever do.

To conclude, let us take the rural landscapes of France and Italy as an edifying example. They have had dense human habitation over many hundreds of years, and are still remarkably productive and beautiful. As farming has become mechanized in the last

century they have also become attractive areas for low-impact, multi-use “agri-tourism” that should serve us as a model for how diversified, small scale farms can co-exist with visitors.

The real problem for Sauvie Island (and I’m sure it’s not alone in Oregon) is two-fold. First, natural resources like the beaches on the Columbia River or the natural areas on the north of the island are easily accessible and attractive to residents of our largest metropolitan area. There is no pending legislation, or any motivation for, regulating this access, so it will continue to drain our over-burdened Volunteer Fire Department and Sheriff’s contingent. Second, the problem is large scale circus-type fall attractions that face no regulatory hurdles under existing rules, that benefit a very small number of large land-owners, and make a candy-apple and petting-zoo travesty of what rural life is like.

The problem is most certainly NOT additional residents on EFU or MUA land.

Very sincerely,

Yianni Doulis