



“Making Every Resource Count”

Oregon Wheat Growers League 115 SE 8th Street, Pendleton, OR 97801 (541) 276-7330 www.owgl.org

**TO: Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Members of Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources**

FR: Blake Rowe
CEO, Oregon Wheat Growers League

RE: OWGL Urge Your NO Vote on SB 1037

The Oregon Wheat Growers League (OWGL) is proud to represent the nearly 2,000 farm across Oregon that produce wheat, one of our State’s largest and most valuable crops. Wheat is grown in 30 of Oregon’s 36 Counties and, with nearly 90% of our production going to export markets, it is one of Oregon’s most important export crops. Wheat contributes hundreds of millions of dollars in direct and indirect value to Oregon’s economy, especially Oregon’s rural economy.

Our growers support the principle that growers should have the right to choose what they grow and their production method. When problems develop between neighbors, we believe they should be resolved between the neighbors, not in the legislature or at the local ballot box.

The large majority of Oregon’s wheat production is conventional, but there are some very attractive local niche markets for organic and specialty wheats. We support and value all these approaches. There is no GE wheat in commercial production in the world and we are fine with that because our export markets, and many of our local markets, are not currently receptive to GE or GMO wheat.

That said, our growers are very supportive of biotechnology and its potential to improve yields, improve wheat quality, help us adjust to climate change, respond to changes in pests and diseases, and reduce our environmental footprint. We may not have GE wheat in production right now, but we are convinced that biotechnology and genetic engineering techniques are an important part of our future. We are actively working with our public wheat breeding program at Oregon State University to test some of the newer technologies like CRISPR and gene guns to see if they can help us bring improved wheat traits and wheat varieties to our growers that would still be acceptable to our customers.

The existing Seed Preemption statute passed in 2013 was well designed. It protects farmers from a patchwork of local crop and seed regulations, maintains the principle that growers should have the right to choose what crops they grow, and helps insure that growers will have access to future innovations in plant breeding. We see no reason to change the current law.

We hope you will join us in opposing SB 1037.