

SJB FARMS

Chair Williamson, Vice-chair McLane, Vice-Chair Rayfield and members of the Committee,

My name is Shelly Boshart Davis and my family farms grass seed, hazelnuts, alfalfa and rotation crops such as wheat and radish seed. We're located in Linn County in the mid-Willamette Valley. I'm submitting testimony today in opposition to House Bill 2739.

We literally just 3 weeks ago planted our first GE crop – Alfalfa. We chose to grow Alfalfa 4 years ago as a crop in between our baby hazelnut trees. There are many reasons to double crop, called inter-cropping when grown simultaneously – and some farmers choose to plant other inter-crops such as grass seed or strawberries. We make these decisions based on our knowledge, labor resources, equipment, and harvest timelines. We chose alfalfa because we could work with a local dairy, and provide local feed to their dairy operation which mutually benefitted both of us. In addition, alfalfa provides many environmentally friendly returns to us including reducing soil erosion, increasing organic matter in the soil, reducing soil compaction, and adding a monetary return as we wait for hazelnut trees to grow and produce – typically 4-5 years. To be a little more specific and possibly giving you more information that you want, one of the big benefits is the nitrogen fixing quality of alfalfa naturally enhancing the soil. For example, the Columbia Basin in eastern Washington is a big grower of Alfalfa and they of course rotate alfalfa out of production, and the next crop whether it be carrots, potatoes, or onions, they get a boost of nitrogen just by following alfalfa in rotation.

We started with conventional alfalfa and have been planting, growing and harvesting conventional alfalfa for the past few years. We decided to change to GE alfalfa this year for a few reasons:

We would decrease our pesticide use.

We would decrease our labor cost, fuel consumption, and emissions.

We would be able to provide a cleaner crop without grasses, which is what the dairy is looking for.

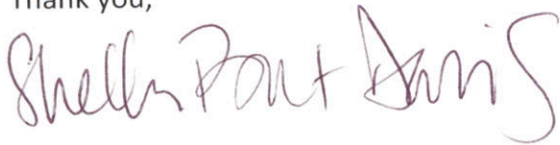
Even though the cost of the seed was almost double, we will save in the long run in our pesticide, labor and fuel reduction costs. That's limited spraying of chemicals. For our markets, chemicals are necessary to achieve the desired standards with pest, disease and weed issues.

With inter-cropping, we must use chemicals that are labeled for two different crops. That means our options are more limited, and it may mean spraying more of a less effective pesticide in order to produce the same result.

If this bill passes, these seed companies could stop selling to Oregon completely. This simply would take out one tool in the farmer's toolbox. I can't state enough how much we need every tool available to us. As you have noticed the weather this year – wet. What about the weather last year – dry. Weather is only one factor in the massive amount of decisions farmers need to make with our crystal ball, and to have all the tools available to us is incredibly important. We were able to use a tool that limits pesticides, labor cost, fuel and emissions while increasing organic matter and nitrogen. Farmers need to be as efficient and productive as possible with our limited resources – taking away tools instead of promoting and celebrating farmer's ingenuity only hurts all of Oregon Agriculture.

Bottom line: we chose to grow GE alfalfa because it uses technology that saves us money and it's better for the environment. That technology is made possible by a patent system that rewards innovation. This bill does the opposite of that – it disincentives innovation and penalizes patent holders for the end users' actions. We don't need that. What we need is more innovation, more technology, more solutions to help us stay in business in a state that's making it harder and harder for us to keep farming.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Shelly Boshart Davis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Shelly Boshart Davis