

**TO: Chair Paul Holvey
Members of House Rules Committee**

FR: Blake Rowe
CEO, Oregon Wheat Growers League

RE: OWGL Urge Your NO Vote on HB 2882

The Oregon Wheat Growers League is proud to represent the nearly 2,000 farms 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 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 innovation through biotechnology and genetic engineering techniques are an important part of our future. We are actively funding the wheat breeding program at Oregon State University to use new technologies like CRISPR to help us bring improved wheat traits and wheat varieties to our growers and customers.

As originally introduced, we believe HB 2882 would block innovation and the ability of our growers to access new traits, biotech or otherwise. The definition of “GE” doesn’t match the current definition used by the US Department of Agriculture and will create confusion within crop breeding and ag communities here in Oregon. We believe the extreme liability provisions will make it nearly impossible for the wheat breeding program at OSU to develop, patent, and release new wheat varieties utilizing genetic engineering techniques. This liability risk will likely make it difficult for our growers to purchase approved GE varieties of wheat and other crops to grow in Oregon.

The proposed -2 amendment to HB 2882 makes significant changes to the legislation and we would continue to oppose the bill for several reasons:

- The -2 amendment retains the original definition for “GE”, so it doesn’t fix the inconsistency and confusion between USDA’s GE definition and the proposed Oregon definition; and
- As proposed, the bill wouldn’t strike the right balance between GE crops and non-GE crops. Neighboring farms do occasionally have conflicts about what crops are grown on their respective fields and whether there is the potential for harm from one neighbor’s crop to the other. There shouldn’t be a presumption that the GE grower needs to protect the non-GE grower. There are many factors, including history, that need to be considered in neighbor disputes and the preference should always be for the neighbors to negotiate or mediate a solution – not to regulate or litigate.

We hope you will join us in opposing both the original HB 2882 and the -2 amendment.