



Organically Grown Company

May 7, 2019

To: House Rules Committee
ATTN: Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee
Re: Testimony in Support of HB 2619

Dear Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

Organically Grown Company (OGC) was founded 40 years ago in Eugene and is now the largest wholesale distributor of organic fruits and vegetables in the Pacific Northwest. Our business is an independent Oregon benefit corporation, owned by a purpose-trust, to serve our mission and stakeholders. Currently, OGC employs more than 200 staff, works with more than 500 growers/vendors and serves over 800 food stores and restaurants throughout Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska and Montana.


HB 2882 was written to create patent holder or manufacturer liability for genetically engineered (GE) contamination events in Oregon. To date, the State of Oregon has failed to protect farmers from unwanted contamination from genetically engineered crops, which leaves farmers vulnerable to economic damages and infringes on their rights to farm with traditional seeds.

Unwanted transgenic contamination is a *very real* issue for Oregon farmers and the burden is particularly impactful for those who utilize organic practices, considering the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) standards strictly prohibit organic operations from using any substance that is genetically engineered or is a product of genetic engineering, *and* for those who have a vested interest in exports, as many nations in the world have banned the sale of genetically engineered crops.

“Non-GMO” verified labeling claims are one of the fastest growing trends in the food industry, with major brands making the commitment to go “GE Free”. Consumers in many markets will reject products if there is a threat of contamination, as such many commercial buyers are now instituting mandatory testing before buying products. Farmers wishing to grow traditional, GE-free crops bare the unfair burden of needing to implement extraordinary measures to try to prevent contamination of their land, crops, and seed stock from the risk of cross-pollination and cross-contamination from GE crops.

Protecting Oregon’s non-GE farmers is sound economic decision-making on the part of our Legislature. While we ultimately want to see patent holders and manufacturers held responsible for GE pollen drift contamination, so that farmers are not pitted against other farmers, I support legislation that call for the regulation of GE crops in Oregon. This is a positive move for the future of farming in our state. Please vote HB 2882 out of committee with a “do pass” recommendation.

I wish these comments to be submitted as testimony for public hearing.


Natalie Reitman-White
Vice President, Trade Advocacy
Organically Grown Company

Mike Dill 
Food Safety & Compliance Manager
Organically Grown Company