

LYNN P. FINDLEY  
State Representative



DISTRICT 60  
Baker, Grant, Harney,  
Malheur, and part of  
Lake County

OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

From the Desk of  
Representative  
Lynn P. Findley

May 16, 2019

Colleagues,

I write to you today in regards to HB 2456 B, a bill that you will have the opportunity to vote on today. There has been a lot of confusion regarding this bill and I wanted to take the opportunity to explain it and hopefully answer any questions or concerns you may have.

First, HB 2456 B is another one of my bills relating directly to HB 2012 from the 2017 Legislative Session, in which the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region was created. Over the past year, the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Board has identified that Malheur County has very strong potential for economic success, but the Region has experienced stagnant growth, economic decline, and workforce challenges in recent years, while neighboring communities of Idaho have seen significant development. One of the contributing factors is a shortage of rural residential housing options in comparison to Idaho. For your reference, in the past year there have been 138 homes built in neighboring communities in Idaho and only 23 in all of Malheur County.

HB 2456 B would allow up to one hundred 2-acre lots of *non-viable* (Class IV-VIII soils) farmland to be rezoned for rural residential use. I understand that rezoning can be a controversial issue, but it is important to note that this is not high-value farmland, nor is it practical for reasonably obtaining a profit through farming. We have worked extensively with the Oregon Farm Bureau and the Malheur County Farm Bureau on crafting language. Within HB 2456 B is an irrevocable deed restriction requiring the property owner to acknowledge the protected rights of farm and rangeland practices in the area. While the Oregon Farm Bureau is still technically opposed, they feel like we have made extensive progress and will not actively oppose it.

Additionally, there has been some confusion about the tax component of this bill. The original bill did have a tax credit element, however, that has been removed and HB 2456 B is now strictly a land-use bill. Other things to note include that this is not directed towards low-income housing, but would instead work towards attracting higher wage earners working in the Border Region while living in neighboring communities in Idaho. This negatively impacts economic development, workforce attraction and retention, and tax base stability in the Border Region.

Finally, the intent of HB 2456 B is not to erode current land use regulations. The Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region is not a pilot project and this bill could not be extended to other areas in Oregon. I understand how important it is to protect our valuable agricultural land, but we need some avenue for limited rural housing on non-viable farmland in the Border Region. We cannot take a one size-fits-all approach to land use in this area of the state.

Please let me know if you have any other questions and I would be happy to have a conversation with you.

All my best,

Lynn P. Findley



5/18/19