



*Protecting Our Natural Heritage
From the Coast to the Cascades*

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6 February 2020

Chair Senator Shemia Fagan
Senate Committee on Housing and Development
State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Senator Fagan and Committee Members:

Please accept the following comments on behalf of LandWatch Lane County, a non-profit that for nearly 25 years has worked with neighbors to protect farm and forestland, natural areas and open space in Lane County.

From its inception Oregon's land use program has been under siege in local jurisdictions, courts of law and the state legislature by development interests devoted to eroding and eliminating its protections. SB 1555 is just the latest egregious example.

This special interest bill, an end-around decision by LUBA and the Court of Appeals that denied the applicant's attempt to obtain a church as a non-farm dwelling on EFU land in Douglas County, would set a state-wide precedent for mandatory allowance of non-farm dwellings in the farm zone for "religious officials." The bill represents yet another effort to have the legislature co-opt and overturn court judgments based on land use law. While offering unequal treatment of said officials and other landowners, SB 1555 provides no definition or requirements for "church, parsonage or religious officials" or for what happens when the church or parsonage ceases to exist and no analysis of the impacts of such dwellings on nearby farm operations and traffic on rural roads.

When people are flocking to Oregon in droves, we need increased land use protections, not myopic, self-interested incursions on our agricultural land and those who farm it. In the interest of fairness and farmland preservation, we urge you to vote no on SB 1555.

Thank you.

Robert Emmons, President
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