



Locally Grown
and
GROWING STRONG

Senate Committee on Natural Resources

OFB Testimony in Support of SB 590

February 10, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of SB 590. By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB) is the state's largest agricultural trade association, representing nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families in the state, many of whom farm croplands in unprotected areas of the state.

Whether it is through their careers, volunteer opportunities, or responsibilities as rural landowners, Oregon's farmers and ranchers frequently interact with wildfire on the landscape. In unprotected areas, farmers are the first responders, and sometimes the only responders to wildfire in their remote communities. Equipped with ranch radios, tractors, home-built suppression equipment, and the weight of protecting their home, farm, and neighbors on their shoulders, Oregon's rural landowners are often tasked with putting out dangerous wildfires all on their own.

With this in mind, we urge you to support SB 590, as it would allow lands designated as "croplands" to join Rangeland Protection Associations (RPAs or RFPAs). RPAs are volunteer nonprofit groups of landowners trained and authorized by state law to respond to wildfires. RPAs have defined responsibilities, including minimum standards for training, and protection from liability when conducting fire protection operations. Most importantly, the ability to join or partner with an RPA grants those protecting croplands key financial assistance to acquire heavy equipment, radios, and personal protective equipment. We must give rural Oregonians the tools they need to effectively fight fires as safely and efficiently as possible.

For these reasons we strongly support SB 590. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today and please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

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