



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 665 ♦ Waltherville, OR 97489

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## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 16

June 9, 2021

Dear Chair Smith Warner and Members of the House Rules Committee:

My name is Amy Wong and I am the Policy Director at Friends of Family Farmers (FoFF), a farmer-led non-profit organization that has advocated on behalf of small farmers and ranchers across Oregon for over 15 years.

While FoFF recognizes Oregon's need for more housing, we are concerned about the precedent this bill could set in terms of Oregon's land use system and the preservation of agricultural lands for productive farm use. FoFF believes that preserving farmland is imperative, especially in the wake of Covid-19. The pandemic highlighted the need for improved regional food security and allowing houses to be built on up to 200 acres of exclusive farm use lands in Eastern Oregon could hinder production in this region.

And as we have seen in recent years, adding housing that is not related to farming, ranching, or forestry increases wildfire risk in several ways – most wildfires are caused by humans (inadvertently), and puts firefighters and communities at risk. Wildfire maps show areas of "very high" and "high" risk wildfire risk outside of Ontario and Vale, in areas zoned EFU.

Instead of opening Eastern Oregon's farm and ranchlands to residential development, the state should invest in growing existing agriculture-related businesses, improving transportation needs of agriculture, incentivizing value-added production, and helping new farms get access to affordable farmland.

Sincerely,

*Amy M Wong*

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