



Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire Recovery OFB and 1000 Friends of Oregon Testimony on SB 559

February 18, 2021

Chair Golden, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity for our organizations to submit comment in opposition to SB 559. By way of background, the Oregon Farm Bureau is the state's largest agricultural trade association, representing nearly 7,000 farm and ranch families in the state. 1000 Friends of Oregon is a nonprofit, membership organization that works with Oregonians to support livable urban and rural communities; protect family farms, forests and natural areas; and provide transportation and housing choice. Both of our organizations are strong supporters of Oregon's land use planning system and Goal 3, which calls for the preservation of agricultural lands for agricultural uses.

From our understanding, SB 559 is intended to allow for certain non-farm human exercise classes, such as "goat yoga." Goat yoga is a fitness trend where yogis exercise and meditate in the presence of goats. This is a traditional yoga class, but goats are added to the area where the yoga class is taking place, for therapeutic and entertainment purposes. Sometimes goats walk on the participants during the class, and this trend has become very popular on social media.

While we understand the desire to take advantage of certain business trends, we have concerns about SB 559 as written because it squarely allows a non-farm use in the farm zone with no compelling ties to productive agriculture, and has the potential for conflicts with existing farm uses.

The business for which this bill is sought, Original Goat Yoga, has tried to equate their need for exclusive farm use property for their yoga business with the equine therapy bill that passed in 2018. These are not the same. In the equine therapy situation, the underlying use - horseback riding, including therapeutic horseback riding - is already an allowed use in an EFU zone. The bill simply allowed the actual "counseling activities," between a counselor "acting within the proper scope of any licenses required by the state" and their client to occur onsite and in conjunction with the horse care, in a structure that is "accessory, incidental and subordinate to the farm use on the tract."

Here, in contrast, the underlying business is yoga. The materials provided by Original Goat Yoga speak to "visits" and "agri-tourism." This is not licensed therapeutic counseling that is secondary to the agricultural use of exclusive farm use land. Were this bill to pass, it is hard

to imagine where the line could be drawn between actual farm use of farmland and simply adding animals to any use.

Although rural Oregon is attractive for recreation and possibly yoga, agricultural operations are commercial ventures that can be hazardous for those unfamiliar with farming practices. Farm fields are an integral part of highly regulated businesses and farms contain heavy machinery and equipment, emit loud noises and abrasive smells, and contain a host of other necessary practices that are incompatible with yoga classes. Adding goats to a class does not make a yoga studio or class a farm use, compatible with neighboring agricultural practices, or consistent with the intent of land use planning Goal 3.

For these reasons, we are opposed SB 559 and urge the Committee to not move forward on this bill. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Samantha Bayer
Policy Counsel
Oregon Farm Bureau
samantha@oregonfb.org

Mary Kyle McCurdy
Deputy Director
1000 Friends of Oregon
mkm@friends.org