



January 23, 2023

House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Testimony in opposition to HB 2487

Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Hartman and Owens, and members of the committee,

Central Oregon LandWatch (“LandWatch”) is a conservation organization that, for more than 35 years, has protected Central Oregon’s forests and high desert, rivers and springs, fish and wildlife, and its vibrant communities. We work to conserve the region’s ecosystems, wildlife habitat, and working rural lands balanced with a responsible, sustainable approach to planning and fostering thriving communities.

LandWatch opposes HB 2487, which would add “wedding or event venue” to the list of allowed uses on land zoned for Exclusive Farm Use east of the Cascades and in counties with a population of fewer than 85,000.

Oregon continues to lose farmland every year, and would-be new farmers face huge barriers to success.¹ Chief among the reasons for farmland loss is real estate speculation. When farmland is allowed to be used for nonfarm uses, such as weddings and other commercial events, the cost of the land is artificially increased. Suddenly, the value of farmland is artificially increased when the market perceives that nonfarm, commercial uses may be readily established. Existing farms face conflicts, cannot afford to expand, and new farmers cannot access land. Meanwhile, Oregon statutes provides that the intent of Exclusive Farm Use zoning is to “substantially limit alternatives to the use of rural land” because “the preservation of the maximum amount of the limited supply of agricultural land is necessary to the conservation of the state’s economic resources.” ORS 215.243.

Commercial events, and especially weddings, are incompatible with the realities of commercial farming. Farm operations produce noise, dust, heavy vehicle use, pesticide and herbicide application, and odors. Siting commercial uses like event venues inside urban growth boundaries, far away from farm life, buffers events from these realities of farm operations. It also buffers farmers, whose work often starts with the morning sun, from disruptive events.

¹ See 2020-2021 DLCD Farm & Forest Report, https://www.oregon.gov/lcd/Publications/2020-2021_Farm_Forest_Report.pdf





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The already excessive list of nonfarm uses permitted on farmland in Oregon does not need another. Please protect farmland for farmers and do not allow weddings and event venues in Exclusive Farm Use zones.

Respectfully submitted,

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Central Oregon LandWatch



WE DEFEND AND PLAN FOR CENTRAL OREGON'S LIVABLE FUTURE