

Submitter: Anthony Benedettini
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources
Measure: SB789
Date: 0

To: Senate Natural Resources Committee

From: Your Name/Organization/Farm

Re: Support for SB 789

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources,

My name is Anthony Benedettini, and I live in Portland, OR. I'm a consultant for food and wellness-focused businesses and have a background in nutrition.

I am writing today in support of SB 789, which maintains current protections for the Willamette Valley's lucrative brassica vegetable seed industry.

As a certified nutrition coach, I often advise people against using canola oil for many reasons. Not only is it damaging to one's health when cooked with, but is also a crop that, when over-farmed, can destroy the biodiversity of a region.

Like the incentives to build cars in Detroit or grow oranges in Florida, protecting key industries is a cornerstone of smart economic policy. In the Willamette, that means protecting land for high-value seed growing, and for the many crops that don't interfere with high-value seed growing, like grapes and grasses.

Rapeseed/canola, a low-value crop, endangers our valuable seed crop industry, and should be grown elsewhere. This crop's cultivation can happen in many agricultural areas of Oregon where it will not endanger high-value seed crops with the risk of genetically engineered cross-contamination, and pest and disease spread.

Oilseed alternatives to rapeseed are available. These oilseed crops provide many of the same benefits to farmers and could be grown more widely with far less danger to speciality seed crops. These include flax, safflower, sunflower, yellow mustard, and camelina.

A few politically connected farmers are pushing to grow rapeseed/canola in the Willamette protected zone. But we should not open Pandora's Box: once cross-contamination and pest spread happens, it cannot be reversed. The risk to our seed

industry is just too great to gamble with. Once contamination happens, our seed cannot be sold on the global market, and we lose precious seed varieties that have been cultivated for generations to ensure food security.

We should be protecting the Willamette for this key industry, and for the biodiverse seed varieties that growers all over the world depend on. We must extend the protections indefinitely and protect what's good. There is simply too much to lose. Here, as with so many public policies, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

SB789 is a wise extension of the current policy, enshrining the current protections and collaborative system in state law.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to vote YES on SB 789 to ensure the Willamette Valley stays one of the vegetable seed capitals of the world, a very special place for growing high-value seeds, and an economic powerhouse for our state.

Sincerely,

Anthony Benedettini