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March 8, 2023

Senate Natural Resources Committee
Attn: Senator Jeff Golden (Chair)
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 789

Dear Chair Golden, Vice Chair Gilrod, and Members of the Committee:

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

For over 13 years, I've served as Executive Director for Oregon Tilth, a leading nonprofit certifier, educator & advocate for organic agriculture. We certify over 1100 farm operations across the U.S. and Mexico, with diverse crops, geography and scales of production. We are the largest organic certifier in Oregon.

In 2014, I served on the Oregon Governor's Task Force on Genetically Engineered Seeds and Agricultural Products. The issue of canola production in the Willamette Valley shares many of the themes and challenges outlined in our Task Force Report. My testimony in support of SB 789 is informed by my experience serving on that task force, which included many meetings amongst diverse agricultural stakeholders to frame the issues in light of a broad range of views.

- *Allocation of risk and balancing risk with benefits is an important policy consideration in this case.* Voluntary approaches to "co-existence" between farmers growing crops which can cross contaminate via pollen drift works best when all parties involved share risk.
- *In this case, cross contamination is a significant economic risk to brassica seed producers, but not to canola producers.* Because they share the same plant family, growing canola near other Brassicas can bring problems of cross-pollination, disease, and pests.
- *Brassica seed is well-established and economically significant.* A recent assessment by the non-partisan firm Highland Economics illustrates how the brassica seed industry provides much higher revenue and jobs creation to Oregon compared to canola. The assessment also demonstrates the importance of permanent protections to ensure the Willamette Valley remains one of the vegetable seed capitals of the world.
- *SB 789 extends and codifies an existing regulatory system that represents practical compromise.* This legislation doesn't prohibit all canola production in the Willamette Valley; it still allows up to 500 acres of canola in the Willamette Valley.



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For many years, protections in the Willamette Valley for high-value seed crops have ensured stability and profitability for Oregon seed growers, and access to the profitable global market for our seed sellers. *Allowing those protections to sunset is not good policy. It's also bad for business by introducing an unpredictable, unstable environment for seed growing.*

Thanks for your consideration and I strongly encourage you to vote in support of SB 789.

Kind regards,

Chris Schreiner
Executive Director
Oregon Tilth