

Submitter: Emily Pence

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources

Measure: SB789

Date: 3/9/23

To: Senate Natural Resources Committee

From: Emily Pence, Fedco Seeds

Re: Support for SB 78*

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

My name is Emily Pence and I am writing on behalf of Fedco Seeds.

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

- Fedco Seeds purchases many brassica seeds from farmers in the Willamette Valley, and we have concerns about increased canola production contaminating our product. To help ensure the purity of our seed, we have for the past few decades employed industry leader Foodchain ID to test samples of our seed lots for the presence of transgenic contamination. We remove any seed lots that test positive for transgenic contamination. The tests are expensive, but in a time of genetic roulette they are necessary, though not sufficient. Only if the seed trade takes an adamant position that it will not tolerate GE contamination in products can we maintain any integrity in our seed supply. We are concerned that we would no longer be able to source non GMO contaminated seed from our many talented seed growers in the Willamette Valley if Rapeseed/canola production increases in this area.

- The Willamette Valley is one of the last remaining regions in the world suitable for large-scale vegetable specialty seed production, including the majority of the world's brassica seed supply. Over 90% of some brassica seed varieties, like cabbage, are grown in the Willamette Valley. Increased and unpinned canola acreage could irreversibly damage this industry.

- Rapeseed/canola, a low-value crop, endangers our valuable seed crop industry, and should be grown elsewhere. Rapeseed/canola 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.

- For many years, protections 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. Rolling them back is bad for business, and creates an unpredictable, unstable environment for seed growing.

- 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.

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,

Name Emily Pence

Position Title/Role Seeds Purchaser

Organization Fedco Seeds