

April 6th, 2023

To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Clackamas County Commissioner Ben West
Re: Support for Senate Bill 1087

Dear Chair Lieber and members of the Senate Rules Committee,

I am writing briefly in my capacity as a county commissioner in Clackamas County, although please know I do not speak for the entire commission and our commission has not taken an official position on this measure.

I would like to register my support for Senate Bill 1087. Though this concept is limited solely to Lane County, allowing counties the ability to sanction this kind of land use opportunity to support their farmers who both live on or adjacent to their property. It will help farmers make a living-wage from their farm activities, while trying to preserve the greater Senate Bill 100 land use goal of preservation of farmland. That seems like a fair and balanced compromise to our land use system.

We know generally that farming, due to the high cost of land and farming inputs, has put multigenerational farming out of reach for many families. Allowing a use like a farm café creates value-add income for a farmer while ensuring an income stream to help offset other farm business costs if the farmer's café is successful. As I understand this bill, the county health codes would still be in effect which would allow us to do regular annual inspections in which we could ensure that farm café operations are both in compliance with county health laws as well as the provisions of this measure.

As a commissioner, I think it's fantastic that Lane County wants to see this use be allowed, and is willing to model out its success or failure for other counties to potentially emulate via a future allowance that would have to be further deliberated by the Legislature in some subsequent future biennium. However, in working to preserve farmland for future generations, we must ensure people have the ability to keep that land in working form in a manner that keeps up with the costs of farming, taxes, and foreign agricultural competition. Oregon's farms should be celebrated, and farm cafes are a low barrier way for city families to access the country and engage in the celebration of Oregon's bounties to learn where food comes from and why farmland should be protected as an asset for Oregon.

I support Lane County's efforts to bring this idea forward, and I would encourage a YES vote.

Sincerely,

Commissioner Ben West
Clackamas County