



Friends of Family Farmers ♦ PO Box 751 ♦ Junction City, OR 97448

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

I am writing on behalf of Friends of Family Farmers in support of SB 789. Friends of Family Farmers represents more than 1,600 small, highly diversified and local market farmers. Many of the farmers we work with are specialty seed producers. SB 789 is incredibly important to the viability of small farms in Oregon, and the seeds they grow account for millions of pounds of food across the globe.

The specialty seed industry is a huge asset to Oregon. Not only does it produce seeds that grow millions of pounds of food here and across the world and generate tens of thousands of dollars per acre according to the recent study from Highland Economics (which has been used by a wide array of industries including agricultural commodity groups), it also provides a pathway to viability for small acreage farmers. Because the value to space ratio for specialty seed crops is so high, this is a way for folks on small acreage to produce a good living and support their families. I know many farms in our network that grow only seeds, but even more who grow a few seed crops a year to increase their income, produce some stability in year round cash flow, and make the most of their limited resources.

In addition to increased pest and disease pressure, the main issue is cross contamination from canola to seed crops and the potential for contamination of organic seed stock by genetically engineered (GE) canola, since over 90% of canola is GE. This makes it a very different crop than brassica specialty seed. There are no laws stopping Oregon canola growers from using GE varieties. Some Oregon growers previously cited the fact that the now-defunct oil processing facility in Rickreal required non-GE canola as their reason for choosing non-GE varieties. However, now that Oregon canola growers have to transport canola to Warden, WA for processing, it is unclear if the non-GE requirement remains. And because canola crosses so easily, non-GE varieties are often contaminated with GE, so this remains a significant threat to seed production. Please see testimony from European and Japanese seed companies already on the record for more information about how this issue has played out in other parts of the world.

There has been disagreement on the record for this bill regarding the science of Canola's potential as a contaminator. While the opposition relies on one scientist's interpretation of one study, it is an established fact that canola needs to be limited in seed growing regions. The Willamette Valley Protected district did not originate this practice. All [three of the other rapeseed/canola protected districts](#) in Oregon have seed protections. No rapeseed is allowed in the Masher/Idaho Protected District; only heavily-regulated "Research" rapeseed is allowed in the Central Oregon Protected District; and rapeseed is subject to numerous regulations in the Northeast Oregon Protected District. Rapeseed is not allowed in Washington's Skagit Valley's

[brassica seed production district 2](#), and pinning and isolation are required wherever rapeseed/canola is allowed in Washington.

A very vocal minority is prioritizing their own convenience in growing canola over the entire specialty seed industry. We have heard arguments from opponents citing canola as an important feed source for cattle, an economically viable rotation for grass seed farmers, and more. While those uses may be good for canola, there are dozens of other crops that could be grown for these purposes on that ground as well. Canola is not a unique crop in the industries where it is being used, it is only unique in its potential to wipe out our valuable specialty seed industry. There is no logic in prioritizing a low value crop which is relatively new to the valley over an entire industry that has been enriching Oregon's farmland, small operators, and rural economies for decades.

I urge you to listen to the seed growers presenting in the hearing on 5/11/23 and to not let the canola industry jeopardize Oregon's specialty seed industry. Please support SB 789 and make the Willamette Protected District permanent.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Morrison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alice Morrison
Co-Executive Director
Friends of Family Farmers