

Submitter: Amelia Hard

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and
Water

Measure: SB789

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members:

As you are aware, strong protections for high-value seed crops have for many years ensured stability and profitability for Willamette Valley seed growers, and ensured access to the profitable global market for our seed sellers. Rolling those protections back would be bad for the Oregon economy and bad for Oregon's farmland. Removing protections would risk cross-contamination and create an unpredictable, unstable environment for seed growing.

I have worked for almost four decades as a volunteer in the fight against hunger and in efforts to improve the diets and health of our citizens. I can assure you that replacing brassica seed production with the production of rapeseed/canola is a step in exactly the wrong direction, since brassicas are a "superfood" packed with health-giving vitamins, minerals, and fiber, while canola produces an oil that is higher in omega-6 than omega-3 and therefore contributes to the inflammatory effects of the American diet that result in higher rates of Alzheimer's, obesity, cancer, and heart disease.

Our Willamette Valley brassica seed industry is worth more than \$24M per year and provides over 90% of the world's brassica seeds for some varieties. A comprehensive new Economic Assessment shows the importance of maintaining the reasonable, sensible protections of the Willamette Valley Protected District, as so many other protected districts throughout our state and region have done.

The fight against SB 789 is being led by a few politically connected farmers who want to grow rapeseed/canola in the Willamette protected zone. But you need to remember that if we allow rapeseed/canola to be planted in the protected zone, cross-contamination can easily occur, and once that 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.

Your "yes" votes are crucial at this pivot point in protecting the Willamette for this key industry, and for the biodiverse seed varieties that growers all over the world depend on. We must extend these protections indefinitely to 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,

Amelia Hard
(unaffiliated community volunteer and concerned citizen)