Submitter: Christopher Dreger

On Behalf
        Of:

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

Measure: SB789

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members:

For many years, protections for high-value seed crops have ensured stability and profitability for Willamette Valley 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.

The Willamette Valley brassica seed industry alone 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.

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.

We are at a pivot point with protecting the Willamette for this key industry, and for the biodiverse seed varieties that growers all over the world depend on. We must extend the protections indefinitely and 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,

Christopher Dreger