

February 7, 2024

Dear Chairman Jama and Committee Members,

Although I support many tenets of SB 1537, including infrastructure funding that prioritizes affordable housing WITHIN existing urban growth boundaries and climate-smart incentives, I am writing today to voice my opposition to the provision allowing a one-time expansion of UGBs that disregards Oregon's existing land use laws. The "one-time" characterization itself is somewhat misleading, as the provision is allowed to remain in effect for the next nine years, until January 2, 2033.

My husband and I own a 60-acre farm in Junction City and we would be directly impacted by this provision. We are located just outside of the existing UGB for Junction City, with a front-row seat to the expansion of The Reserve housing development currently being built next door to us. (It should be noted that the very large single family homes going up there are priced in the \$480,000 to \$600,000 range, well outside of the price point of the low and middle income population that Governor Kotek purports to assist with this bill.)

New farmland can't be created, and once it's lost to housing development it's gone forever. That alone should be enough to make policymakers extremely cautious about designating it for other uses. But to personally understand the devastating impact of what will be lost should my property and so many others throughout Oregon be taken out of agricultural production and resource conservation and developed for housing is on another order of magnitude altogether. In fact, I'm not sure that we actually can know in advance the true consequences of this action, but please indulge me for a moment while I try to give an idea of what's at stake. My farmland is not a blank slate—there's life here, there's history here, there's sustenance for body and soul here.

My husband and I have been renovating this former grass seed farm with the goal of being a community asset that provides not only food, ecological habitat and natural beauty, but also preserves fertile, productive farmland for the future. As such, we raise and sell sheep for meat, wool and breeding stock; plus poultry for eggs. We have plans to open a sheep dairy when we can finance the infrastructure for the enterprise. We have donated eggs to Junction City Local Aid over the years and also ground lamb to Food For Lane County last year.

Our pasture-based system sequesters carbon, captures rainfall for groundwater recharge and builds essential soil fertility. Our native tree belt provides shade and water filtering of the seasonal slough that runs through the property. Our land also hosts a variety of ecological networks. Since transitioning the land from commercial grass seed farming to pasture, we have seen the return of earthworms below ground and all manner of insects (from praying mantis to endangered pollinators), small mammals, songbirds and raptors above ground. It is particularly gratifying to witness the return of great egrets to our fields in the winter and blue herons,

kestrels, bees and ladybugs in the summer. We are invested in the health and resiliency of our land and by extension, our local community. We hope to provide even more value with the planting of a fruit orchard and perhaps olive trees on the property, as well as shade and fodder trees for the sheep.

However, not only have we already been negatively impacted in a variety of ways by the current expansion of The Reserve subdivision, but this provision would have a chilling effect on our plans for future agricultural improvements to our property. Why undertake the considerable investments of time, labor and expense of long-term infrastructure projects and tree plantings, knowing that should we be forced off the land by physical or economic hardship, all of our efforts could very well be bulldozed, paved over and built upon?

And if SB 1537 is passed into law as is, where will the erosion of Oregon's land use laws end? This "one-time expansion" establishes a precedent that only encourages it to be employed again and again if the goals purporting to mitigate the current housing situation aren't met or whenever a future housing "crisis" is identified, regardless of the causes of the dilemma or other possible solutions available besides gobbling up farmland.

Instead of pitting housing and agriculture against each other as competing interests and sowing the seeds of a future food shortage and/or environmental disaster into the proposed solution of today's problems, a truly progressive policy would maximize the housing opportunities within the current UGBs while also dedicating commensurate funding to support landowners and farmers in Oregon to be able to preserve and pass on their farmland to others who wish to become land stewards and farmers now and in the future. Now that's an Oregon that I would truly be thankful to live in!

In the meantime, please either amend SB 1537 to exclude the UGB expansion or vote no on the bill.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Talley