



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

My name is Rhianna Simes. I am the mother of two young children, I am a botanist, and owner/farmer of Verdant Phoenix Farm. I am also a member of the Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association board of directors. I live outside of Phoenix, Oregon. Specialty Brassica seed growing in Southern Oregon and in the Willamette Valley is a vital part of our economy here in rural Oregon. Our community and the farmers here grow seeds in our region that produce millions of pounds of food the world over.

Collectively we are very concerned about Canola in the Willamette Valley because of its ability to cross with other Brassicas and ‘travel’ down the I-5 corridor to our region. This threat directly impacts viable farm businesses. We also depend on sensible protections from canola cross contamination for our business and livelihood. I am writing to you to express support for HB 4059-7. However, I strongly oppose HB 4059-8.

I care about seed farming in the Willamette Valley Protected District because I am part of the Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association. As an Association, we are very concerned about cross-contamination and pest spread, because it cannot be reversed- it ruins our valuable products. This risk is a big deal to our seed industry, and is too great to gamble with. Once contamination happens, our seed cannot be sold on the global market. This means that all of the expenses, time and effort invested– saving seed the previous year, storing it, planting, watering, caring for the resulting plants, and then harvesting the seed – will be a total loss for farmers. We need protections so that our seed crops are valuable and we can support the local economy and our families.

If our seeds are contaminated, it means they are worth nothing and cannot be sold! This is absolutely devastating for small, Oregon farming businesses! Increased canola production in the Willamette Valley could put my family’s income in jeopardy.

I am grateful for the work of the committee, the named isolation districts and the limitation of GE canola in the WVPD. We urge you to remember that Oregon’s seed growers support rural economies, and we are critical for meeting the growth need for food security through seed security. This proposal already represents a huge compromise for seed growers in the state and we cannot afford to lose any more ground. When you consider HB 4059, please listen to the needs / guidance of specialty seed growers and support the strongest possible option for rural Oregon farmers.

Sincerely,
Rhianna Simes, M.S.Ed.
Verdant Phoenix Farm & Southern Oregon Seed Growers Association