

Good morning, Chair Golden members of the committee.

February 27, 2024

For the record, I am Charles Ortiz, the public relations Chair for the Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association. I am here to testify on behalf of the WVSSA in support of HB4059. While maybe not the version I envisioned testifying in support of, this current version will continue to protect Brassica seed production in the Willamette Valley Protected District and further coexistence.

HB 4059 was originally crafted around the concept that isolation distances and enhanced regulation of GE brassicas were key to long term brassica coexistence in the Willamette Valley Protected District. They still are.

HB4059-7 was not a ban on GE, it was a well-reasoned and rational solution to the enhanced risk posed by widespread GMO Canola contamination of the brassicas of the WVPD. Simple and direct.

That risk is real, and the consequences of error will be everlasting. The canola industry may not suffer its long-term consequences, but the rest of us certainly will.

Observation is a key part of science and the observation from every place GMO canola has been widely introduced is that it doesn't stay in place. As they say, GMO Brassica pollen acts the same as non-GMO brassica pollen. It will outcross, the GMO genes will spread, and their characteristics will become endemic in the biome. It will be especially acute in a spatially limited area like the Willamette Valley. GMO canola escapes will happen. Once here, there is no going back.

It is not necessary for canola to be genetically modified to still be canola and therefore have its utility for farmers. Canola was bred using conventional breeding techniques from non-GMO brassicas. It wasn't until later that GMOs were introduced.

You've probably heard it many times. In fact, someone asked me the question last week: If they don't use GMO canola, they don't need GMO canola, and it doesn't yield as well, then what gives? Good question.

If the specialty seed industry can accept that non-GMO canola is an unpalatable turnip then its high time that canola interests put down their dogma and agree that GMO canola is unnecessary unwarranted and unjustified in the WVPD. Right to farm statutes do not provide a legal defense for causing economic damage to neighboring crops. Maintain the status quo, keep the 500 Acre cap and extend the sunset.

Thank you.

Respectfully submitted.

Charles Ortiz

Public Relations Chair Willamette Valley Specialty Seed Association