

Submitter: Zoe Bradbury DeSurra
On Behalf Of: Valley Flora Farm
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and
Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB78

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 77 and SB 78. I urge you to support these bills.

My name is Zoë Bradbury DeSurra and I'm a commercial produce farmer on the Southern Oregon Coast. I was born and raised in Langlois, and our farming operation has been in business for 27 years. I'm writing to voice my support for SB 77 and SB 78, which will prevent luxury home and hotel development on our limited ag and forest lands. This current abuse of our land use system undermines the very reason that SB 100 was passed into law over fifty years ago: to protect Oregon's working lands so that farming and forestry can continue to be viable industries in our state. Land-use loopholes that allow developers to build luxury estates and entertainment venues on farm and forest zones are driving up land and housing prices, hurting farmers and ranchers, and threatening the future of agriculture and forestry. SB 77 and 78 are common-sense bills that address these threats, and I ask you to support them fully.

I am in the fortunate position of being able to lease family land at a reasonable price to run my operation, but speculative land pricing is making it all but impossible for new and beginning farmers/ranchers to lease or purchase land and build a business. Even with a financially-stable operation, there's no way I could afford to buy my own farm on a farmer's income at current property values. Prices have been driven up sharply in the past five years by a spate of high-end and second home development by out-of-state buyers, who consider land in Coos and Curry County to be "cheap" by California standards. One of my long-time employees who has dreamed of running his own operation has given up hope of affording land anywhere in the area and has considered changing careers altogether.

Speculative land pricing also contributes to the lack of affordable housing in our rural community, which is the biggest obstacle to recruiting new employees to work on our farm. This problem is only exacerbated by the manipulation of "replacement dwelling" provisions that allow existing residences to be torn down and replaced with large, expensive estates, many of which serve as second or third homes and mostly sit empty all year, putting a further squeeze on our limited housing supply.

As a farmer, my business can only survive – and with any luck, thrive - if our land use system supports real agriculture and forestry, not wealthy real estate development. SB 77 and 78 are much-needed solutions that will close these damaging loopholes that are proven to be bad for rural communities, working landscapes, and Oregon’s agricultural economy. The legislature urgently needs to address these problems and show solidarity with the farmers and ranchers who work hard to steward our precious resource lands and feed our communities. Please stop land speculation and the conversion of Oregon’s limited agricultural and forest land by supporting these two bills.

Thank you for considering my comments and allowing this opportunity for public input.

Sincerely,
Zoë Bradbury DeSurra