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

March 5, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 77. As President of Rogue Advocates, I strongly urge you to support this critical bill.

Rogue Advocates is a Southern Oregon organization dedicated to protecting our region's farm and forest lands through responsible land use planning. For years, we have witnessed the consequences of loopholes in Oregon's land use laws that have allowed the conversion of productive agricultural and forest lands into luxury developments and commercial venues.

I am writing today in strong support of SB 77, which will address the problem of speculative land pricing through abuse of the "home occupations" statute. Currently, the vague language in this provision has become a loophole that allows hospitality, entertainment, and other commercial uses on land designated exclusively for agricultural and forest production. This is driving up farm and forest land prices beyond the reach of family farmers, ranchers, and timberland managers.

In the Rogue Valley, we've seen firsthand how this loophole has been exploited to establish large-scale hospitality and entertainment facilities on land meant for growing food and fiber. These commercial operations not only take agricultural land out of production but also create conflicts with neighboring farm operations and drive up property values, making it increasingly difficult for working farmers to afford land in our region.

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SB 77 would close this loophole by clarifying the definition of "home occupations" and providing clear and objective standards to ensure the primary use of a rural home is residential and not commercial. This is essential for preventing rural gentrification and displacement that turns working lands into luxury developments.

It's time for the legislature to again pay serious attention to Oregon's farm, range, and forest land. The longer we ignore these issues, the more irreparable damage we do to Oregon's precious resource lands and the families that work hard to feed our communities. Once we lose these lands, we can never go back.

Please help stop the land speculation and conversion of Oregon's limited agricultural and forest land by supporting SB 77.

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

Sincerely
Steve Rouse

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