

Chris Beck
1430 SW Englewood Dr. Lake Oswego, OR 97034
Mthood1@aol.com 503.274.1517

March 6, 2025

To: Oregon Senate Committee on Natural Resources

Re: SB 77 and SB 78

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and members of the Senate Comm 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.

While I am a lifelong resident of the Portland Metro area, I grew to understand long ago that Oregon's land use system--and particularly its goal of conserving working lands for agriculture, forestry, and grazing--is essential to maintaining a high quality of life for both urban and rural Oregonians. SB 77 and SB 78 offer long overdue course corrections to ensure that the rural economy is not further degraded by the illusory benefits associated with luxury estates, weekend residences, and occasional teleworkers seeking exotic shelter on what to them is nature, and what to the rest of us is our economy growing food, producing wood fiber, supplying clean water and energy, etc.

Make no mistake about it, the pressures from modern-day development scenarios (recreational residences on farm and forest land) will negatively impact the rural economy and undermine economic development efforts in rural towns as well as our larger cities. These bills take a step in the right direction to counter these modern pressures.

In a society where extraordinary wealth has concentrated to a small number of American (and Oregon) families, there is a tendency to accommodate those relatively few people and allow them to have whatever they want and are willing to pay for at whatever price. The problem with this scenario, however, is that it undermines more important aspects of our economy and our social needs as well. Rural gentrification drives up land prices so much that it makes it increasingly difficult for new families of farmers and foresters to live in rural areas or work the land. Moreover, rural residential development undermines efforts to center rural economies in our traditional Main Street locations.

These bills would help close long-abused loopholes that are bad for rural residents, rural economies, and our state as a whole.

Other people are providing expert analysis on the specific elements of these bills. I'll stick to the philosophical purpose. Oregonians are divided about many things, but conserving our rural working lands and ensuring rural town center vitality, are goals both rural and urban Oregonians can strongly agree on. It is worthwhile recognizing that there are many aspects of life and policy where urban and rural citizens can share common objectives. These bills offer a shining example of policy that both rural and urban legislators can embrace.

Please stop the land speculation and 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.

Chris Beck

Cc Senator Rob Wagner and Representative Daniel Nguyen