

Dear Chairman Goldman and the Committee,

I am Cory Koos, and along with my husband Kim Koos, we are in support of SBs 77 and 78 and against Senate bill 778. We are 4th generation farmers in the mid-Willamette Valley. We farm within a thirty-mile radius in Linn County. Our main operation is growing seed crops- meadowfoam, clover, brassicas, coriander and grasses. We also have a seed cleaning warehouse and 50 acres of timber. Our fields are owned by us and leased by others.

Beginning back in the 70's, I was fortunate enough to be part of Senator Hector Macpherson's committee that helped define Goal 3, in Senate Bill 100. We had only 6 exceptions, today it is 60. As I sat on our county planning commission, I witnessed EFU rules weakened further. If there was a pocket of development, the county viewed the surrounding land committed to development too. Last year we commented that during harvest we seem to mitigate conflict on a weekly basis. Fires started, near misses as our large equipment moves from field to field, complaints of bees flying, and complaints of dust as we work our fields. Conflicts that we hoped were taken care of when we developed our land use laws.

We are a commercial farm made up of several pieces of ground, with about 40% owned and 60% leased. Our landlords are predominately 1st generation "of the farm" families, who understand farming. This year some of our landlords were approached by out of state investment firms trying to buy their ground at very lucrative prices. As farmers, who already invested money in equipment and crops, we feel the squeeze. The economics of farming are changing too. Markets are still, prices are lower than in the last five years, and seed companies are trying to get us to renegotiate our existing contracts taking a drop in price. We are now subject to overtime costs that are unrealistic in our business. We seem to be balancing on a precipice. When a big mega house is built on farmground, our property tax assessments rise.

Ninety-six percent of Oregon farms are family owned. As the economics and landscape of farming change, having legislative support is imperative. Putting a check on the incline of exemptions to Goal #3 is long overdue. I am proud to finally have a bill that honors agriculture and the founding fathers of Senate Bill 100 and helps to save Oregon's natural resources. I say YES to SB's 77, 78 and NO to SB 778.