

2/20/2026

TOPIC: SB 1586

Dear Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, and members of the committee:

My name is Jocelyn Bridson and I'm a resident of Washington County, a Certified Crop Advisor, and environmental scientist with 25 years of work experience, including 15 years on farms. I am writing strongly in opposition to **SB 1586**. This bill would put **1,700 acres of prime farmland** in Hillsboro at risk of industrial development. The need to rezone this land has not been demonstrated.

1. **Oregon has already discussed this and decided: this land is designated as a rural reserve until 2065.** SB 1586 is an unnecessary, unneeded land grab that defies prior commitments to keep this land in agricultural production. No amount of money or "development" should make the Legislature revisit this decision.
 - Agriculture contributes to Oregon's economy: Farmland in the area is farmed for grass seed, nursery stock, clover, hay and blueberry crops, livestock and a local winery. Grass seed is Oregon's fifth top commodity and the Oregon grass seed industry generates over \$1 billion in total economic activity annually.
 - There is developable land elsewhere: There are at least 10,000 acres of industrial lands already available inside Oregon's urban growth boundaries, including several hundred that can be developed in Hillsboro alone. Why would we pave over our world-class soils and destroy local farm businesses, when we have not utilized the industrial lands already available in this region and beyond?

2. **The value of farmland has GROWN since the rural reserve decision was made:** Since the decision to protect farmland until 2065 was made, the reasons for protecting farmland with high value soil have INCREASED since the decision was made. We now have MORE information and science to support the many values of farmlands, including the ecosystem services that farmlands provide for not only nature but also people living in our cities and suburbs.

We have to stop thinking of **land as "parcels" and instead as their contribution to the greater landscapes, watersheds and communities.** There are many economic benefits of farmlands beyond food and fiber production, and many states and countries are investing in farmers and farmland protection, examples include:

- One of the most compelling environmental benefits of farmland protection is its role in climate mitigation. [Studies show](#) that greenhouse gas emissions from developed urban land uses (like the proposed development in Hillsboro) are up to 70 times higher than those from croplands. A separate [2014 study](#) from Duke Nicholas School for Environmental Policy Solutions concluded that **“farmland preservation, more than any of the other management activities, will likely have the single greatest impact in stabilizing and reducing future emissions across multiple land use categories.”**
 - Oregon’s [Natural and Working Lands Advisory Committee](#) has members with expertise in wetlands, forests, rangelands and farming have been asked to help inform the state’s Global Warming Commission projects such as providing feedback on carbon sequestration calculations and what workforce and training programs that are needed to support implementation of natural climate solutions on the state’s natural and working lands. As Oregon considers future climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, farmers are a key part of that strategy. **But the thing about natural climate solutions on farms is this – they won’t be an option for the future if we don’t have farmland.**
 - **California** has already started investing in protecting farmland for climate values with their [Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation](#) (SALC) program. Recently, the state has also integrated farmland protection into [California’s Nature-Based Solutions Climate Targets](#) with goals to conserve 12,000-19,500 acres per year of farmland between 2030-2045, directly linking agricultural land protection to climate action.
 - **New York City** has avoided billions of dollars in water treatment fees and instead [pays farmers millions](#) to implement conservation easements to protect farmland and implement best management practices
 - The **U.S.D.A. NRCS** uses [voluntary floodplain easements](#) to pay farmers to keep agricultural land undeveloped and restore it to safely store or convey floodwaters, often on a permanent basis. These easements reduce downstream flooding of cities and towns by lowering flood peaks while compensating landowners for providing flood protection as a public benefit. In the [United Kingdom](#), has a similar program.
3. **Public Process:** This bill has bypassed public process on numerous concerning levels. This decision may seem like “only” 1700 acres, but **it signals a dangerous precedent where virtually any previous Oregon law could be overwritten in**

small circles and closed-door meetings. The amendment for this bill **has not been posted before the public hearing**, making it impossible for the public to fully and appropriately respond to the impacts of this legislation. This bill is before the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee, **bypassing the policy committees that deal with land use, natural resources, and economic development.** Does your Finance committee have also have expertise in agriculture, watershed management, flooding, water quality, and climate mitigation? Once you pave over farmland, you cannot get it back and a decision of this caliber should not be taken lightly. A short session is not an appropriate time to try to pass such a controversial piece of legislation through.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote no on SB 1586.

Thank you,

Jocelyn Bridson

Linked References:

Studies show: <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3t2160dp>

2014 Study: https://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/ni_ggmoca_r_3.pdf

NWLAC: <https://climate.oregon.gov/natural-working-lands-committee>

SALC: <https://www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov/salc>

CA Nature-Based Solutions: <https://resources.ca.gov/-/media/CNRA-Website/Files/Initiatives/Expanding-Nature-Based-Solutions/Californias-NBS-Climate-Targets-2024.pdf>

NYC: <https://www.nyc.gov/site/dep/news/25-004/nyc-dep-commits-228-million-help-protect-forests-near-watershed-support-area-farms-and#/0>

USDA: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7/subtitle-B/chapter-VI/subchapter-C/part-624/section-624.10>

UK: <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/farming-and-flood-prevention/>