



OREGON PROPERTY OWNERS  
— ASSOCIATION —

## **Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue Testimony in Support of SB 1586**

The Oregon Property Owners Association has represented Oregon property owners before the Legislature, local governments, state agencies and Oregon courts for nearly 40 years, with more than 12,000 contributors across the state, including all 36 Oregon counties. With this background in mind, we submit this testimony in support of SB 1586.

While our organization was not the architect of this specific proposal, we feel compelled to offer a necessary perspective on the current discourse — specifically, the urgent need for a return to pragmatic land-use planning.

### **Restoring the Intent of Land-Use Planning**

Oregon's land-use system was designed as a comprehensive framework intended to balance 19 distinct Statewide Planning Goals. Unfortunately, that balance has been lost. For too long, Goal 3 (Agricultural Lands) has been treated as an absolute veto, while Goal 9 (Economic Development) is consistently marginalized.

The land-use system was never intended to be an indefinite barrier to essential infrastructure or economic recovery. When "preservation" is leveraged to block even the most disciplined industrial expansions, we are no longer "planning"— we are stagnating.

If we intend to provide Oregonians with stable housing and living-wage jobs, we must move past the reflex to demonize development. Maintaining the status quo is, in effect, a choice to limit Oregon's future potential and not plan for its success.

### **Addressing Hyperbole with Facts**

The rhetoric surrounding the "threat" of this bill is largely disconnected from its actual text. The -4 amendment provides such narrow land-use parameters that even incidental commercial amenities — like a local café — would be excluded. This bill is targeted for providing industrial development in a specific community that wants and needs the opportunity.

Furthermore, while the original 1,700-acre designation better reflected the area's industrial needs, the current 373-acre proposal is an exceptionally modest compromise. We urge the Committee to recognize this as a fraction of what is necessary to incentivize meaningful development, but a step in the right direction, nonetheless.

## **Property Rights and Choice**

It is important to clarify that this bill does not involve condemnation or forced conversion. If a farmer wishes to continue farming, they are free to do so. If they wish to ensure their land remains agricultural in perpetuity, they have the right to place a working lands easement on the property.

However, the property owners directly impacted by this bill are proponents of it; they seek the freedom to utilize their land to help their community thrive. The narrative that this bill “hurts” the agricultural community is emotionally charged rhetoric that does not match reality.

We must ask why the preferences of farmland advocates — who do not own the land or even live in this area — should supersede the rights of local landowners to participate in their community’s economic future.

## **Equity vs. Exclusivity**

Finally, we must address the nature of some of the opposition. When organizations representing established interests and affluent rural enclaves, like winery owners, oppose such a limited expansion, it highlights a stark divide in this conversation: the “haves” vs. the “have nots”.

It is easy to demand “farmland preservation” from the vantage point of a multi-million dollar tasting room in the hills; it is an entirely different reality for the worker stuck in an hour of gridlock because we refuse to permit job centers where they are actually needed.

It is easy to advocate for a “no growth” policy when your own wealth and home are already secured; it is quite another to be a young Oregonian looking for a foothold in a state that seems more interested in pulling up the ladder of opportunity than in building a future for its next generation.

It is easy to say “develop somewhere else” when you have the means to opt out of public infrastructure; it is an entirely different matter for a public-school administrator watching their district’s tax base dwindle while the cost of serving our students continues to rise.

It is **much harder** to stand up for the broader economic health of the state and say that we need change. This bill is a test of whether our system can still function for its intended purpose: to facilitate growth and meet needs. We hope the Committee will see through the noise and support this vital opportunity for a community in need. We urge an “Aye” vote on the -4 amendment.