

Submitter: Matt Gordon
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586

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

My name is Matt Gordon and I'm writing in strong 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. 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?

I am deeply concerned about the State Legislature making this irreversible, irresponsible and unjustified decision, for so many reasons.

SB 1586 sets a precedent that we don't want for our protected agricultural lands. If the State Legislature undoes the certainty that rural reserve designation provides to surrounding farm businesses on the basis of highly speculative development interests, where will it stop? Oregon's agricultural industry is one of the largest industries in the state. Economic development, if it is to be a statewide effort, must account for all industries that support Oregon's economy. We cannot set this dangerous precedent to give one-off legislative favors to one industry in one county. That is not economic development, it is a corporate land grab designed as a "Jobs Act" to make it sound more appealing. We know that the Legislature is interested in economic development and we are too. But economic development must be a coordinated, statewide effort. We cannot sacrifice the economic development of our 35 other counties by only supporting this one.

My understanding is that about 1,500 of the 1,700 acres within this area are being actively farmed for grass seed, wheat, nursery stock, clover, hay and blueberry crops, livestock and a local winery.

Once you pave over this prime farmland, you cannot get it back or make more of it in some other place. A decision of this caliber should not be taken lightly. A short session is not an appropriate time to try to pass such a hugely controversial piece of legislation through.

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

It does not have any sideboards in place to fulfill its empty promise to create jobs, the land is not necessary, and the consequences are irreversible.

Thank you,
Matt Gordon