

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

My name is Raechel 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.

- **Regarding public process:** This bill has bypassed public process on numerous concerning levels. It is inappropriate for the Legislature to undo a highly-negotiated decision that was made to designate this land as rural reserves until 2065. There was a commitment to keep these lands in agricultural production for at least that long, and there is no justification to reverse that commitment. It's also concerning that 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. Lastly, it's concerning that this bill is before the Senate Finance and Revenue Committee, bypassing the policy committees that deal with land use, natural resources, and economic development.
- **Regarding Economic Development:** SB 1586 sets a scary precedent 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. That 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. Refusing to bring jobs or develop existing industrial lands outside of Washington County hurts our state's economy as a whole. There are at least 10,000 acres of ready-to-develop industrial lands inside of existing UGBs across the state. We don't have a statewide industrial lands inventory, but there is likely more land available. We cannot sacrifice the economic development of our 35 other counties by only supporting this one.

- **Regarding our Agricultural Economy:** SB 1586 will fracture the agricultural economy in Washington County, making it harder for surrounding farmers to travel between fields that would become separated by industrial development. The impacts of removing this farmland will not just impact the farms within these boundaries. The neighboring agricultural industry will suffer, especially as county roads will be paved over, water resources will become scarce, and producer processing facilities that neighboring farmers rely on will be greatly impacted by the reduction in local business, further disrupting the local agricultural supply chain. The cumulative impact on our agricultural economy is so much bigger than you'd expect.
- **Regarding the 1,700 Acres Current Uses:** There is some confusion around whether these lands are being farmed. One point of confusion is around the primary crops you see on these lands, which are wheat and grass seed crops. Wheat and grass seed farms often look like empty fields that are not in use, especially when dormant, but that is far from the case. Grass seed might not be food for humans, but Oregon is a major global supplier of grass seed – golf courses, sports fields and livestock managers around the world rely on premium seed exported from Oregon. Grass seed is Oregon's fifth top commodity and the Oregon grass seed industry generates over \$1 billion in total economic

activity annually. Our understanding is that about 1,500 of the 1,700 acres within this area are being actively farmed for these purposes and more, including nursery stock, clover, hay and blueberry crops, livestock and a local winery.

- **Regarding Land Classification:** Any move to rezone these lands outside of their rural reserve designation is inappropriate. Taking them into the UGB or redesignating them as urban reserves does not change the truth: SB 1586 is an unnecessary, unneeded land grab that defies prior commitments to keep this land in agricultural production. There are already multiple hundreds of acres of unbuilt industrial land in Hillsboro alone, and more than 10,000 acres across the state, that could be developed right now as Research and Development lands to create jobs. R&D facilities would not have nearly as large of a footprint as data centers, and since that is the case, R&D facilities can easily fit into underutilized industrial acres already available. That means that if this land is not for data centers, then it is simply not needed. And if it is for data centers, then it is being falsely advertised.
- **Regarding Potential Data Centers:** Farmland cannot be replaced once it's paved over. If data centers take over this 1,700 acres, the legislature needs to be prepared for an industrial ghost town in the coming decades. Just like computers got smaller and smaller, and now they have shrunk down to fit inside our watches, data centers will also get smaller and smaller. Experts predict that very quickly, data storage technology will advance. One data center in the future could easily fit into the size of a small office, and these massive buildings we're developing today will be obsolete. We will have destroyed 1,700 acres of precious farmland for nothing, and so many more across the state. Not for housing. Not for long-term jobs. But for a temporary, highly profitable, low-job industry with no consideration for the future. We will regret this decision.

Once you pave over farmland, you cannot get it back. 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,
Raechel Gano