

Submitter: Zane Smith  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1586  
Date: February 25, 2026

I urge the Oregon Legislature to vote NO on SB 1586. This bill will not bring in long-term, high-paying tech jobs; it will easily be taken advantage of due to its recklessly vague wording; and it will be incredibly destructive to irreplaceable, fertile farmland while ignoring expert advice and the voices of the people who live here.

Data centers do not bring in long-term, high-paying tech jobs. The construction of data centers is similar to an infrastructure project rather than the sustainable formation of businesses that support many long-term jobs and a healthily growing community (Nguyen & Green, 2025). There may be high-paying construction gigs available during the construction of these facilities, but these are short-term. The long-term jobs available to the community will be very limited. For a 250,000-square-foot data center, only about 50 full-time employees are needed (JLARC, 2024, p. 13), and half of those are likely contract employees with much lower compensation and benefits. This is a ridiculously small number when compared to other technology companies, even ones with smaller campuses. Portland Business Journal & Database USA, as cited on Hillsboro’s website (2024), show Hillsboro tech companies such as TEL, ASML, and Thermo Fisher Scientific all supporting over 1,000 employees each, many of whom support Intel’s local semiconductor R&D efforts. These are examples of companies that provide tech workers with hundreds of long-term and well-compensated jobs — not the small number of questionable positions proposed by data centers.

I find it insulting and reckless to word this bill so vaguely. The proposed bill states that the land must be used for industrial employment that is, or supports, high-technology, manufacturing, and R&D. “Commercial uses that are accessory to and located within the same building as the high-technology and advanced manufacturing or that support the manufacturing” (SB 1586, p. 15). It is painfully obvious that this wording is problematic and will absolutely allow massive data centers to easily flood in (this is the “loophole”). All it will take for a data center to move in for purely commercial exploitation is a tiny office of a company with a supporting role in the tech space (see any smaller supporting company that works with Intel as an example). The next lines of the bill seek to diminish concern regarding the aforementioned “loophole” by stating that the land may NOT be zoned as “A data storage, processing or information center except as an accessory to or part of a use described in paragraph (a) of this subsection” (SB 1586, p. 15). This line would, in theory, squash the worries about data centers moving in, but the damage was already done with the previous “loophole” statement. Without specific limits to the size and scope of these accessory commercial operations, or specifically and wholly disallowing data centers, more will appear in town, destroy the land, fail to provide long-term tech jobs, and permanently obliterate the sensitive local environment.

This bill will cause irreversible destruction to highly productive and valuable farmland. Novak's article *Paving Paradise* (2001) explains how fruitful our farmland is:

Oregon has a diverse, high-value agricultural industry in the Willamette Valley that includes gourmet specialty fruits and nuts, a growing wine industry and a thriving nursery industry. Such commodities can be produced on small acreages close to developed areas. For example, a nursery in the Portland area thrives even in the shadow of Portland International Airport.

Knowing that even small acreages of land can host successful farms, it is imperative that we protect as much as we can. When we do develop industrial land, it must be done thoughtfully. Figueroa (2026) explains:

Usually, expanding urban boundaries into rural farmland is a lengthy process that involves input from the public. SB 1586 would override that process.

Hillsboro Mayor Beach Pace told lawmakers at the hearing that “few sites in Oregon have been studied more thoroughly and none are more ready and better positioned to immediately help the state’s economic recovery.”

“These lands have gone through nearly 20 years of review, regional planning, legislative actions, task force work, multiple hearings and a public hearings in Hillsboro,” Pace said. The bill would effectively undo a deal from 2014, when Hillsboro city officials agreed to reserve the land for farm purposes for five decades, while designating 1,000 acres elsewhere for industrial use.

Overriding public input to hastily expand urban boundaries is impulsive and selfish. There are myriad reasons why land use needs to be thoughtfully considered. Community well-being, resident health and safety, environmental protection, and thoughtful economic growth are all thrown out the window when misguided legislation like this is proposed. Include and listen to the people of Hillsboro when considering these matters. Pace stressed how extensively this specific land in Hillsboro has been reviewed as viable for expansion. This rings hollow considering the bill would undo a deal that was made only twelve years ago. As stated in Novak (2001), Agricultural Economics PhD JunJie Wu said, “We found that agricultural zoning, state land-use planning, and mandatory review of projects involving farmland conversion are effective in controlling the loss of farmland to development.” The fact that SB 1586 would override some, if not all, of these exact processes is disheartening. If our legislators aren’t listening to the experts on these matters, let alone residents of the region, then we have little chance to build a healthy future without sacrificing irreplaceable farmland.

Allowing data centers to be built will not bring in long-term high-paying tech jobs. Massive rectangular concrete buildings surrounded by hundreds of diesel generators are not worth it for only 50 average jobs. Using vague language to allow these buildings to be constructed is insulting. Ignoring the proper process, experts, and the people is disappointing. Intentional or not, this bill leads to consequences that will harm our farmland, economy, and public trust. As the late MF DOOM observed, “Only in America could you find a way to earn a healthy buck and still keep your attitude on self-destruct.” SB 1586 does exactly that — chasing short-term gains while undermining Hillsboro’s long-term economic growth.

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