

Senate Committee On Housing and Development
February 10, 2025

Senator Khanh Pham, Chair
Senator Dick Anderson, Vice-Chair
Senator Anthony Broadman
Senator Todd Nash
Senator Deb Patterson

Please vote NO on SB 59

Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Greg Leo. I am a contract lobbyist for Charbonneau.

SB 59 proposes preempting homeowner associations' authority to ban the raising of hens, bees and vegetables. After considerable debate, similar bills failed twice before: [HB 3322 \(2021\)](#) and [SB 437 \(2023\)](#). Today's hearing is the third session that this legislation has been considered. Please see the Oregonian article in OLIS for background on why the previous bills failed.

While SB 59 appears well-intentioned, it may have adverse unintended consequences for some residents and could create more conflict among neighbors than it resolves. This legislation preempts homeowners from establishing rules concerning their neighborhoods, specifically those governing gardening, hen-raising, and bee-keeping.

Keeping the decision-making local

Homeowner associations are popularly elected neighborhood governance bodies that develop rules by which neighbors protect their neighborhoods' quality of life and property values. According to the most recent data from the Foundation for Community Association Research, Oregon has approximately 4,000 homeowners associations. Homeowners associations vary widely in character from suburban residential neighborhoods to high-rise apartment and condo buildings in downtown urban areas.

Source: <https://foundation.caionline.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/StateFactsFiguresOregon22.pdf>

Neighborhood rules better address local concerns

Neighborhoods can vary widely within cities, making one-size-fits-all municipal ordinances less than ideal for addressing neighborhood issues. The Foundation for Community Association Research estimated that 565,000 Oregonians, or about 13% of our population, live in communities governed by homeowner associations with rules written locally. Not all Oregonians will want to live next to neighbors raising bees or hens.

Community Gardens are a better way to have “Victory Gardens”

There's a better way. Many Oregonians cultivate vegetables locally in community gardens without the conflicts that this legislation may create with their neighbors. Through cooperative planning and management, raising hens and keeping bees can enhance these wonderful community gardens while avoiding the many issues associated with backyard chicken coops and beehives.

Learning competent and efficient practices

The OSU Extension Service, through the Master Gardener program, and in-person and online classes, is a resource where participants can learn responsible vegetable growing, bee keeping, hen raising, and other best practices in small-scale agriculture. These programs aim to meet the objectives of the bill's sponsors, which is to raise food locally without the inherent problems of hen and bee keeping in dense urban neighborhoods.

Please let residents, organized into homeowner association boards with local governance, decide whether bees and hens are appropriate for their neighborhoods. Please vote NO on SB 59.

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