

Submitter: Gary Vallens
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1578

Dear Chair Pham, Vice-Chair Anderson, and members of the Senate Committee on Housing and Development,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 1578. I urge you to vote "no" on this bill.

I am an Oregonian who opposes SB 1578 because it would allow unlimited pockets of urban-density housing on rural agricultural and forest land without considering the safeguards that protect Oregon's farms, ranches, forests, natural resources and rural communities from inappropriate and harmful development.

SB 1578 authorizes rural counties to rezone up to 50 acres of working lands for urban development without considering impacts on agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat, cultural resources, water supplies or wildfire risk. It also expands the authorization for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) used by cities to increase urban densities into the exclusive farm use zone.

Spot zoning pockets of urban development outside cities and towns with urban infrastructure is costly, difficult to serve, and leads to a sprawling development pattern requiring increased vehicle miles traveled.

Scattering islands of urban development throughout the state's working agricultural and forest land unnecessarily converts valuable working lands for sprawling residential development. It also introduces conflicts between residential use and agriculture and forestry into the midst of our working lands, cutting into these industries' bottom line.

Allowing opportunities for increased residential development on working lands also drives up land prices out of the reach of farmers, ranchers and forest land managers, making it difficult for the next generation to start-up and expand their operations.

Protecting Oregon's farms, ranches, forests, and other natural resources, while focusing housing growth where infrastructure already exists, is both possible and essential. Allowing pockets of urban density in farm lands is not a solution to our housing crisis. I urge you to reject SB 1578.

Thank you for considering my comments and allowing this opportunity for public input.