



SAVE HELVETIA

13260 NW Bishop Rd

Hillsboro, OR 97124

February 25, 2024

Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Opposition to SB 878

Save Helvetia is a private, non-profit, advocacy organization that has been active over 15 years to protect farm and forestlands in Washington County. We organized in 2010 during the Urban and Rural Reserves planning process, studying lands in and around the Helvetia area, submitting testimonies to Washington County, Metro, and LCDC. We then became appellants to the Oregon State Court of Appeals, prevailing in our citizen science assertions that the county and Metro had misapplied the law and administrative rules in selecting urban and rural reserves. The court's ruling invalidated the proposed reserves and the negotiated result became the Grand Bargain legislation (HB 4078) of 2014. This was unanimously endorsed by both houses of the legislature and signed into law by then Governor Kitzhaber. We have since become an affiliate of 1000 Friends of Oregon, monitoring and defending land use laws and principles in Washington County.

We oppose SB 878, which allows additional homes to be built in rural areas – causing added threats of fracturing the farming ecosystem, inefficient travel, carbon pollution, increased wear/tear and hazardous conditions on narrow country roads, groundwater drawdown, crowding, light pollution, disruption of wildlife habitat, and sacrificing our Oregon values of protecting farming, forestry, and good health.

Like its twin the bill would authorize every landowner in rural Oregon to put an additional house on their property, including properties in exclusive farm use and forest zones, as well as in the nearly 1 million acres of land outside UGBs zoned for rural residential use in Oregon. And it allows a bait-and-switch process, stating that the additional house must be for a family member but only until the property is sold.

This matters because it's unnecessary. Oregon law already allows new homes for relatives of agricultural and forest land managers, as well as additional new homes for unrelated farm workers. Locating more housing in and around farm and forest areas increases conflicts with common farming and forestry practices, increases traffic on farm roads, creates additional demand on limited water resources, and can increase wildfire risk. And the mere opportunity for additional residential development further threatens farming as it drives up land prices beyond what farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers can afford.

Respectfully,

Robert Bailey, Secretary
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Advancing policies, leaders and actions that protect Helvetia's treasured resources.