

Date: March 8, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

From: Jim Gilbert – Owner, Northwoods Nursery

Subject: Please oppose Senate Bill 788

Dear Chair Golden and members of the Committee,

Senate Bill 788 is unnecessary and has serious flaws. Weddings and events are already allowed on EFU land, subject to the discretion of the county. While I don't believe that such events should be allowed on farmland due to the conflicts with farming operations, traffic clogging rural roads and complaints about spray drift and noise, it's important that counties be able to control and limit such events.

An additional problem with this bill is its geographic definition. Land use rules should be statewide, not localized. The Hood River Valley, for example, is one of the best places to grow fruit in the world and is the last place where weddings and other events should be allowed, especially without county oversight. Its beauty and proximity to Portland has put great pressure on its precious and fertile farmland. Such events also put pressure on the price of farmland, making it too expensive for growing crops. Yet, it is located east of the Cascade crest and would be covered by this bill.

Weddings and such events should occur in our rural towns, where they will help the local economy and avoid the conflicts and other negative effects of holding them on farmland.

During its entire existence, our land us planning program has been under attack. More and more non-farm uses have been permitted on farmland, eroding one of Oregon's most important natural resources. Please honor Oregon's long legacy of farming and ranching and oppose passage of Senate Bill 788!

Thank you,

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PS: Please go to www.anoregonstory.com to watch a documentary film I helped make, which tells the amazing story of how Governor Tom McCall and many other farsighted and dedicated Oregonians created our unique land-use planning program.