

Submitter: Brenda Smola-Foti
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB788

Dear Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire:

I am writing to express my support for SB 788 and to highlight the importance of allowing farms to earn additional income through diversified business opportunities. Agriculture in Oregon is not only a way of life but a critical part of our economy and food system. However, farming alone is often financially unsustainable due to fluctuating commodity prices, rising land and labor costs, and unpredictable weather patterns. The ability to generate supplementary income through events and agritourism is essential to keeping farms viable.

SB 788 is a step in the right direction by permitting wedding and event venues on farmland east of the Cascades. However, this flexibility should be available to all Oregon farmers. Many farms across the state already host events that celebrate rural life, connect people with agriculture, and provide much-needed revenue. These gatherings support local businesses—including caterers, florists, and accommodations—while maintaining the integrity of working farmland.

Diversification is key to the survival of family farms. Small and mid-sized farms, in particular, struggle to compete with industrial-scale operations. Allowing farms to legally and safely host events provides an alternative revenue stream without interfering with agricultural activities. In fact, it strengthens farms by helping them reinvest in their operations, preserve farmland, and continue producing food for local communities.

Additionally, property owners should have the right to responsibly conduct business on their land. Counties already have public health and safety regulations in place to ensure that events do not pose a risk to neighbors or the environment. By granting farmers the ability to host events under reasonable guidelines, we empower rural communities to sustain themselves economically without relying on external subsidies or development pressures.

I urge you to support SB 788 and to advocate for expanding these allowances statewide. Oregon's farms deserve the ability to adapt and thrive, ensuring that agriculture remains a cornerstone of our state's economy and culture for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your leadership in supporting

rural Oregon.

Sincerely,
Brenda Smola-Foti
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Carlton, Oregon