

Agriculture for Oregon
Our Future

Dear Chair Jama and Vice Chair Anderson:

Feb 5, 2024

Ag for Oregon represents farmers and ranchers from throughout Oregon, who are deeply concerned about repeated attempts to roll back protections for our valuable farm and ranch lands.

Given the threats from climate change and concerns about food security, Oregon's economic future will likely depend more on Agriculture than any other industry. Democrats who have supported conservation of our resource lands for years have turned away from this important work. SB 1537 moves in a direction of destroying land without even knowing how many acres are buildable in UGBs now. There is not even an inventory of buildable lots statewide. This is irresponsible.

Urban Growth Boundaries have protected Oregon's agricultural land for 50 years and it is unnecessary to alter the established procedures to expand them. There are thousands of acres within existing Urban Growth Boundaries that can be developed for moderate and low income housing. This land is in addition to abandoned commercial buildings, vacant lots, deserted large lot retail spaces and underutilized housing that are available for re-development.

Urban development inside existing UGB's saves taxpayer dollars and is most efficient. It is where services, jobs and infrastructure exist. Some will push for UGB expansion, but it will be for large and expensive homes and will do little to help the real housing shortage. All taxpayers will pay more to push services and infrastructure out into these areas and our fertile and productive farmland will be needlessly covered up and paved over forever.

These UGB expansions will not help the housing shortage, but they will destroy prime farmland, harm our wetlands, reduce wildlife habitat, negatively impact aquifers and reduce the positive climate impacts of farmland. Most Ag for Oregon members have been farming and ranching for many years. We value the benefits that Oregon's unique land use planning program has provided for our operations, but more importantly we see the benefits to Oregon for maintaining future production. It's important to strengthen our land use planning program, not weaken it.

If the Oregon land use system is to blame for the high cost of housing, why are housing costs higher for cities all across the country that don't have similar land use protections?

This is not a partisan issue. Bipartisan members of the legislature founded the land use system and have sustained it. Land for future food, plant and fiber production is essential for access to farming by young people of all walks of life.

Please oppose any bills that contain provisions to unilaterally expand our important Urban Growth Boundaries.

Thank you for your support for Oregon agriculture.

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