

Submitter: Michele McKay
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB78
Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash, and Committee Members Girod, Prozanski and Taylor:

I have lived in Bend, Oregon for 35 years, and I am asking you to support SB 78. Thank you for your attention on this issue!

Oregon land use laws authorize “replacement dwellings” for homeowners in farm and forest zones who have lost their homes to natural disaster or decay. This narrow hardship exception was designed to help homeowners quickly and reliably replace the home they lost or that is beyond repair, and it does not require the standard review process for siting new homes in exclusive farm and forest zones.

Unfortunately, wealthy landowners and speculators are abusing this lack of review criteria to tear down modest homes and build large, expensive country estates unrelated to growing food and fiber.

Senate Bill 78 helps address this misuse by limiting the scale of “replacement dwellings,” thereby reducing the speculative attraction of agricultural and forest lands for luxury homesite development.

Here is why this matters to me:

When our agricultural and forest land is lost to luxury home developers, this both takes land out of production and drives up the price of nearby agricultural and forest land.

Oregon’s farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers – especially people who are just growing their businesses – are already finding it increasingly difficult to locate land they can afford to lease or purchase.

Every year, Oregon loses nearly 300 tracts of agricultural and forest land to high-end residential development in the form of replacement dwellings. For efficient food and fiber production, family farmers, ranchers, and forest land managers need large blocks of undeveloped agricultural and forest land.

Please protect Oregon’s rural lands and pass SB 78.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Michele McKay