



M.D. Acres

OPPOSE SB 1578

February 10, 2026

Chair Pham
Senate Committee on Housing and Development

Dear Chair Pham and Committee Members,

For the record I am Mickey Killingsworth and reside on a small farm out of Madras, Oregon in Jefferson County. I also have the family farm between Halfway and Cornucopia, Oregon in Baker County.

This is a very bad bill for several reasons. I will try to highlight the main conflicts that I see.

- This bill is based upon the 2020 federal decennial census and has a sunset of January 02, 2034. The next census is in 2030. Populations can change during that time period. Why would the bill not be tied to the next census?
- Trying to figure out which counties qualify without listing them seems to complicate trying to understand the bill for a simple sheep farmer like me. This bill includes 19 counties where the “Frontier Counties” include ten counties (Baker, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Wallowa and Wheeler). Listing out the counties would make the bill clearer which counties the proposed subdivisions would be allowed in.
- Over half of the counties in Oregon will be allow to put homes that should be within urban growth boundaries not out in vast areas of the counties that qualify. If I read the bill correctly only one “50” acres per county will qualify. So now a county is picking winners and losers.
- Housing needs has been a main focus of this committee for several years and it was to make housing affordable and provide incentives for the housing to be built. All of that is still needed, but this bill doesn’t accomplish that. We know that most of those in need of the housing need to have access to the basic necessities of medical care, groceries, fuel, transportation, education, etc. Being out in the sticks will not provide those basic services that spending the same dollars to build housing within an urban growth boundary will.
- Every legislative session funding is allocated to rural and urban areas to help fund the infrastructure needed for housing. The cost of this type of development and infrastructure costs will be higher due to location. The rural communities need to not be abandoned for this type of proposed development that won’t help the low-income wage earners. I see nothing in this bill about different types of housing, like apartments, town houses, duplexes, etc. The bill appears to be about single dwelling homesites.
- The Oregon Office of Rural Health collects data that uses the Claritas for Oregon zip codes information which is gathered and analyzed by Portland State University. According to their data 2 % of Oregon’s population lives in the ten “Frontier Counties”, 33% of Oregon’s population lives in rural Oregon and 65% of Oregon’s population live in urban areas.



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- Accessory dwelling units (ADU) were passed for rural residential areas that were developed before the land use system and county plans were developed and approved. I opposed that bill because I thought that it would open pandora's box. With great input the size was established to allow a small ADU of 900 square feet, yet this bill wants the size to be changed to allow 2,500 square feet. I have a nice size farm house at 2,000 square feet but to allow an ADU to exceed the 900 square feet is not what the intent of the bill was when proposed and passed. Changing how ADU are to be sited is a real threat to neighboring farms that will allow sagebrush subdivisions as neighbors. Crooked River Ranch is a perfect example of that type of poor planning. When we had fires in Jefferson County this year it took 14 hours to evaluate Crooked River Ranch. I am aware of the fire concerns in rural areas as are you as legislators. You have been trying to come up with some greater protections, but adding more houses where they don't belong isn't the answer. Another recent example is that two years ago, Baker County was hit hard by wildfires and livestock, property and grazing were lost. They are recovering now.
- Sagebrush subdivisions were stopped years ago because of the costs and impacts.
- The section on signing to not sue and deed restrictions for homes built if this bill passes is like right to farm. There aren't really any protections that will hold up in the courts. Someone always loses in a lawsuit.
- Someday I hope that people realize that agriculture is an industry and most of the operations depend upon having land for farming and ranching.
- Agriculture needs the large blocks of land for grazing and economics for farming the ground... economies of scale is needed to keep the cottage industries operating that support agriculture.

Please do not move this bill forward. I know what it means to have a subdivision built next to your farming operation and the conflicts that arise. I lived on my farm for over 20 years when the subdivision behind me was then allowed. I purchased my original farm two years out of college and leased ground that adjoined my farm. Ten years later I could afford to buy out an adjoining farm. It is harder today for the young farmers to acquire the ground to start farming when subdivisions put the cost of buying farm ground over the market value because of development speculation. Think of the future generations that want to be farmers and ranchers by not allowing this bill out of committee.

Sincerely,

Mickey Killingsworth
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