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Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for SB 788 – Events on Lands Zoned for Exclusive Farm Use in Eastern Oregon

Dear Members of the Senate Natural Resources and Wildfire Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 788, which would allow weddings and events on lands zoned for exclusive farm use (EFU) in eastern Oregon. As a landowner and agricultural advocate, I believe this bill provides a valuable opportunity for farmers and ranchers to supplement their income while continuing to operate their agricultural businesses.

Agriculture in Eastern Oregon faces unique challenges, including fluctuating commodity prices, increasing operational costs, and limited opportunities for economic diversification, especially those of us with limited water availability.. Many farm and ranch owners struggle to maintain financial stability, and allowing them to host weddings and events can provide an essential source of supplemental income. This additional revenue stream can help ensure the viability of family farms, allowing them to continue agricultural production rather than being forced to sell or subdivide their land due to financial hardship.

Furthermore, hosting events on agricultural land presents an opportunity to educate the public about the realities of farming and ranching. Many people, especially those from urban areas, have limited exposure to modern agricultural practices. Weddings and events held on working farms and ranches allow guests to witness firsthand the dedication, effort, and stewardship that go into food production. This fosters a deeper appreciation for Oregon's agricultural heritage and the importance of preserving farmland for future generations.

It is essential to balance the needs of agriculture with economic sustainability. Allowing farm and ranch owners to use their land for limited events does not detract from agricultural productivity but instead enhances their ability to continue farming- and a great reason to keep space and shops tidy!. Sensible regulations can be implemented to address concerns related to land use compatibility, noise, and traffic while still allowing landowners to benefit from this opportunity.

I urge you to support SB 788 and recognize the value it brings to Oregon's agricultural communities. This bill will help strengthen the financial sustainability of farms and ranches, promote agricultural education, and preserve the rural character of eastern Oregon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Erin Hansell-Heideman, Owner/Operator Blown Away Ranch