



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

May 17, 2019

Dear Chief Clerk Sekerak,

I wish to submit the following explanation for my vote on House Bill 2456-B.

House Bill 2456-B would allow counties that have established a review board to rezone lands within the Eastern Oregon Border Economic Development Region from exclusive farm use to allow the development of one residential unit per lot or parcel of two acres or more if they adhere to specified parameters.

After careful consideration, I voted no on the bill. While I support efforts that promote the development of affordable housing, I do not believe that HB 2456-B would have accomplished that objective and would have ultimately been detrimental to Oregon's agricultural land use policy. I am concerned by this carve out for agricultural lands in eastern Oregon because if signed into law, this bill potentially sets a dangerous precedent that might encourage similar actions that would further encroach on agricultural lands in other regions of the state, such as in coastal farming communities. I am also concerned about other counties seeking similar expansion that will lead to conflicts in land use when people might be accused of building homes just for a view, or neighbor conflicts relating to pesticide use on proximal farm properties.

The support for this bill maintains that the land under consideration for housing was not valuable, and there were significant sideboards built into the bill. While I appreciate those efforts, there are other paths available in local county government to re-designate land if it absolutely can't be used for agricultural purposes. I think it's important for Malheur and Harney Counties to exhaust all other options before seeking a special carve-out exception from the Oregon Legislature, and it begs the question of whether there is actual agreement on the true value of that land for agricultural use. Without exhausting currently existing avenues to re-designate properties, I am hesitant to place value of needed housing over preserving our land use system.

Sincerely,

Representative Tiffany Mitchell

