

## Dear Members of the House Committee on Rules

### Please OPPOSE HB 2739

Please let me introduce myself. My name is Charles Boyer and I live at 11630 Agate Road, Eagle Point, Oregon 97524. My telephone is [541-826-9873](tel:541-826-9873). My wife and I are family farmers in Jackson County and have lived on and worked our farm since 1991. I currently live in the only county in Oregon where it is illegal to grow crops that are legal under Federal Law but legal to grow crops that are illegal to grow under Federal Law. I am asking you to not let this happen in other counties across the State.

This bill is a front by a small group of radical farmers and duped urban dwellers to stop the agricultural community as a whole from getting access to and using new approved technologies to improve our production and increase our economic well-being. For example, in Jackson County only about 3 percent of the farms are certified organic and they generate just about 3 percent of the agricultural income in Jackson County (USDA census figures). This and similar efforts to remove any opportunities to access or control the use of genetically modified plants is part of a concerted effort to ban all genetically modified plant materials from American Agriculture.

Passage of these types of laws are unnecessary because if I do some activity that is outside the Oregon Right-To-Farm Law or trespass onto my neighbor's property either physically, by allowing weeds to impact his/her crops, or genetically modified plants to encroach on their land then I am subject to legal action through the court system. There a Judge or jury will determine if the claim is valid and what damages I would be liable for.

You will hear all sorts of horror stories about how bad genetically modified plants and plant materials are. But if you will take the time to research this topic thoroughly you will find that the fears of large corporation suing individual farms that have had patented GM plants in their fields have been when the farmer violated his or her contract with the patent holder and either sold or replanted the patented seed. As for the possibility of USDA approved GM plants getting into someone's field is rare. And yes I am aware of the creeping bentgrass issue in eastern Oregon and western Idaho. But bentgrass is not one of the approved 10 plants for use in the U.S.

This bill is bad for Oregon farmers because coexistence has, and does work for Oregon farmers. There are markets for all types of agriculture in Oregon - organic, conventional, GE, and identity preserved. This bill elevates all other types of agriculture above GE crops. Despite what some groups claim, GE crops pose no unique risk to neighboring crops than their non-GE counterparts. For example, the presence of GE material does not affect USDA Organic status. So, as long as an organic grower takes the proper precautions as required under the USDA rules, they are at no risk of losing certification. In fact, not a single farmer has ever lost their organic certification due to the adventitious presence of GE material.

This bill also puts at risk the work of local seed breeders and university researchers. Genetic engineering is a key breeding technique for creating new crop varieties, but the liability created by this bill would greatly discourage those developments. It is important

to remember that seed patent holders have no control over what the end user does with a product. So, with liability for "treble damages" and no control over the growing methods used by farmers, many seed companies could stop selling certain varieties in our state, limiting choices for Oregon growers.

This bill as written is a ploy to attack the corporate companies involved directly or indirectly in agriculture.

If you are not aware of some of the positive things GM crops have done look into the story behind Golden Rice. Golden Rice was developed at a university and made available for planting in countries where rice makes up a large share of children's diets. The local populations were told by those folks against GM plants that Golden Rice was a bad thing. A large anti GM campaign was waged around the world in many third world nations. The impact was many countries and farmers refused to plant Golden Rice. The difference between Golden Rice and white rice is Golden Rice has vitamin A in it and could help keep between 300,000 and 500,000 children a year from going blind. The cost of the privilege to use Golden Rice is the cost of the seed which is about the same as that of white rice.

You will hear all sorts of stories like how the young farmers in India are committing suicide because of the cost of GM cotton and how they cannot pay the prices so they kill themselves. Actually the suicide rate for Indian Farmers is lower than for urban dwellers. The suicide rates for both groups has been going up for some time. However the trend started several years before GM cotton was introduced into India and farmers there could grow it.

Just for your information, there are research projects all around the world, including work in the Netherlands as well as Washington State University, USA to develop a perennial strain of wheat that will produce the same quality and volume per acre as the annual varieties we now use. This would reduce the amount of tillage we currently do by many, many times. It would reduce the amount of herbicide use for weed control by huge volumes. Reducing these activities would have tremendous impacts on reducing soil erosion, stream siltation, chemical spills on land and in water, and large reductions in air pollution from using fossil fuels to cultivate the ground for planting.

Please do not take these opportunities away from Oregon farmers across the State as they have been taken from me. Please do not pass this bill and allow uninformed urban folks to be duped by the hysteria of a few loud anti GM crop people and place similar restrictions on agriculture across the State of Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Charlie

Charles L. Boyer