



April 16, 2015

Sen. Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Judiciary Committee
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 341

Chair Prozanski & Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Tourism Development Council of Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory (OMHT), the destination marketing organization (DMO) for Clackamas County, I urge your support of SB 341.

Along with an increasing demand for locally-grown produce and the growing popularity of farm shares, farmers' markets and farm-to-table dinners, more people are wanting to know where their food comes from, see how it is grown and meet the people who grow it. Early on, OMHT recognized the significant potential agri-tourism has for bringing visitors out into our rural communities. It is for this reason that agri-tourism, along with recreation and heritage, is one of the three pillars on which our Tourism Master Plan is based.

As a DMO, we work with local farmers and ranchers to develop and promote authentic, meaningful and memorable agri-tourism experiences. Increased visits and participation in agri-tourism activities demonstrates to us that there remains significant demand for this programing. And we also like to think some of it has to do with our promotional efforts.

There is, however, a problem with more people visiting farms and ranches, and that is increased liability exposure for agri-tourism providers. Accidents or incidents can be caused by any number of issues, including "inherent risks" associated with simply walking onto a working farm or ranch. Many of these are beyond the control of the provider.

We believe a base level of protection for agri-tourism providers against reasonably-defined inherent risks should be secured. Twenty-two other states have addressed this issue and passed agri-tourism liability laws of their own. We feel it is further merited here in Oregon because similar protections already exist in state statute for equine activity sponsors. (See ORS 30.687 – Actions Arising Out of Equine Activities)

Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory believes SB 341 is a balanced approach that fairly delineates risk and responsibility between providers and participants. We urge your support.

Sincerely,

Jim Austin
Legislative Affairs Coordinator
Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory