

Submitter: Jeni Billups

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3372

Co-chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water:

My name is Jeni Billups and I am a farmer from Corvallis with property in Lane County. I am writing today to support HB 3372. Currently in Oregon it is legal to water a ½ acre garden or use 5,000 gal/day for a commercial purpose, but neither of those apply to growing food and farm products for sale. If already legal to use this water, why am I restricted in the way in which I use the produce that comes from the land?

This personally impacts me because it is my goal to use my land to help encourage healthy eating, build resiliency in my community and assist people experiencing hardship. In order to do this, I must be able to also sell some of the produce to help defer costs and maintain a financially sustainable model for my family. I am in the process of learning how to dry land farm, in order to minimize the need for irrigation. However, not all crops are conducive to dry land farming, so I also want to irrigate the allotted 1/2 acre and have the flexibility to sell these items, along with the produce from my dry land farming efforts.

I am new to farming and am approaching it from the best possible stewardship of natural resources, because I believe we were created to oversee the natural rhythm of God's incredible creation. That said, we must also decide when it is necessary to step in and assist in critical moments, with added nutrients or water, to keep the plants healthy. During WWI and WWII, our government encouraged citizens to start Victory Gardens to supply more food for their families and communities. It was considered a patriotic thing to do. It saddens me to know that we are restricted from doing this today. When our world is characterized by neighbors not knowing each other and individual needs over community needs, I think it is appropriate that we are considering whether or not the existing laws make sense or if it is time for change.

We need to be realistic about what we prioritize for water use in our state. Allowing people to grow food or farm products for sale with a gallon restriction on ½ acre will not bankrupt the system, and farming is too much work for people to rush into production on such a small scale. Give communities back the ability to feed and provide for themselves, pass HB 3372.

Thank you,

Jeni Billups  
Lily of the Valley Ranch  
6600 NW Burgundy Drive  
Corvallis, Oregon 97330