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House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Water, and Natural Resources
Submitted via Oregon Legislative Information System (OLIS) testimony portal

Subject: Testimony in Opposition to HB 4153 as Introduced

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the Committee:

I was a State Representative from 2003 to 2009 and after that a member for eight years of the Land Conservation and Development Commission. I now live on the Linn County farm that has been in my family for over a century and where I grow hazelnuts.

Farm stands provide a positive opportunity for growers to sell their products directly to the public and receive a higher return than is available in the wholesale market. Tourist activities connected to farm stands are a good way to introduce the public to agriculture and improve their understanding of where their food comes from. These advantages are achieved when the farm stands are limited in scale so as to not make it more difficult for farmers nearby to operate.

HB 4153, as introduced, would replace farm stands with large "farm stores" that are not properly limited in scale. These stores could have permanent buildings, prepared food, meals, retail merchandise, and ongoing agritourism as by-right uses in the exclusive farm use zone. The inevitable friction with nearby farmers created by the farm store and its customers over slow moving equipment traffic, spraying, and other agricultural practices would overwhelm the advantages farm stands have historically provided.

HB 4153 needs significant amendments to achieve the right balance between the positive opportunities offered by farm stands and the needs of the larger agricultural community. The short session of an even-numbered year does not allow enough time to develop such amendments. Instead of pushing through a bill that is not ready, a better approach would be to form a work group with representatives from all the interested perspectives to craft a bill for the 2027 session that achieves the right balance. When I served in the House we used such a process for some difficult issues and it produced better policy results.

Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,



Greg Macpherson