

Hood River, OR 97031

February 2, 2026

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

RE: Opposition to HB 4153 as Introduced

Dear Committee Members:

I'm writing to oppose HB 4153, which significantly expands the definition and allowed uses of "farm stands" in Oregon.

I'm sympathetic to the state's farming community. I live in a county with a significant amount of land and resources focused on farming. Like others who live or visit here, I purchase from local farmers through the regular summer and winter farmers' markets, through a weekly farm "collective" sale, and by visiting a number of the farm stands in the county. I also work with several non-profits that try to alleviate the difficulties that many farm workers face in trying to feed their families.

I know that many local orchardists and farmers are "up in arms" about county restrictions that require more stringent adherence to county rules governing everything from the safety of temporary play structures to parking lot sizes and more, while others worry that large crowds of people visiting stores or attending large events can cause traffic problems on our roads, particularly when farmers are using equipment during harvest.

Hood River County depends heavily on tourism, yet we struggle with the negative impacts of tourism as well as the tax revenues that it brings to the city government through transient lodging taxes and other payments. Road congestion, one of the highest DUII rates in the state, and other challenges are exacerbated by high numbers of tourists (not to mention wildfire risk).

Our farm families are struggling with a tight labor market, tariffs that put our farm products at a competitive disadvantage, rising water costs (and potentially a drought situation in summer 2026), and uncertain weather and market conditions, so it's natural for many to hope to use a portion of their land to provide a more stable revenue stream through expanded "farm stands."

But though some of the uses in HB 4153 could be the answer to that stable revenue stream, overall it looks to me as though insufficient thought has been given to what the proper scale and local controls for those operations should be. Local county governments are best able to evaluate local conditions and react to requests for conditional use permits. Farm stands can create real positive impact, or can create new problems throughout a county.

This year's legislative session is a short one. State legislators are leading a state with very significant budgetary issues, a significant deficit problem, threats to the state's road resources, along with many issues that make Oregon a non-competitive state for businesses, affecting the number and quality of high-paying jobs in the state.

HB 4153 should be deferred this year. Legislators need to spend more time considering how to balance farm stands and their use with protecting non-urban areas and farmland from endless sprawl. The state has been willing to accept higher housing costs as a result of farmland protection. Now it seems reasonable to consider bills that challenge what kinds of uses can move into land now zoned for farm use. Those discussions will need more time than the legislature has this session, and deferring the bill to 2027 seems reasonable. Creating work groups to gather more public perspective and making the right choice in 2027 is better than rushing through an ill-considered measure now that could permanently alter our rural landscapes for the worse.

Thank you for your time.

Tracey Tomashpol