

Submitter: Meg Asby

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

My daughter can taste the difference between a Shuksan strawberry and a Hood strawberry, thanks to Topaz Farm. She has picked fresh cucumbers from the vine, learned all about goats, and celebrated the return of spring, summer, and fall, every year at the farm. Our pantry is (still! even in January!) full of canned pickles, made with not only the regeneratively grown, no-spray cukes and dill and garlic we picked up at the farm, but using the canning recipe we got from Paula, one of the many beloved employees at Topaz. Half of my camera roll is photos of my kids in the sunflowers, in the pumpkins, in the berry fields at Topaz. Whenever my family comes to visit from out of state, we try to plan their visits around the iconic farm to plate dinners at Topaz, hands down the best food we've every had because it's made from fresh fruit and vegetables picked that day in the fields we can see from our seats. I could go to the grocery store by myself, but why would I when I can buy hyperlocal produce, plus other essentials at the Topaz market while my kids eat caramel apples at the picnic tables or — when they were younger — climb on the tractors in the play area. Getting food for my family each week is a special memory, not just an errand, and I feel so good knowing where our food comes from and how it was farmed. I know farming regeneratively isn't easy — or cheap, with all that labor hand-weeding the fields to avoid using chemical sprays — and I love that when I buy a ticket to the sunflower fields or to fall harvest fest, my money is helping Topaz pay their employees a living wage and afford necessary farm equipment. Ordinary Oregonians like me WANT to be able to visit farms. We LOVE agritourism, because it connects us to the land, to our community, and it makes our kids excited about where their food comes from. My daughter recently said, "I can't do the summer ballet intensive next year, because I'm finally old enough to work at Topaz, and I'll need to be free all summer to do that." Why is my teenager counting down the days until she's old enough to wake early all summer long to work on a farm? Because she is connected to the land, because all of her memories at the farm are happy ones, because her entire childhood she's had fingers stained with Oregon marionberries. If you want the next generation to care for farmland, you need to instill that love in them early and often. I've never been to visit a large corporate farm, but we're at Topaz every week in the spring, summer, and fall. Please make it easy for special farms like Topaz to be financially sustainable. It would break my heart for Topaz to sell to some large grass seed farm, because of outdated farm rules. This bill is a win-win for farmers and Oregonians. Please protect small farms for future generations, so my daughter can teach her children why Shuksans are even better than Hoods, in the same fields where she learned to taste the difference.