

Submitter: Adam Sunshine
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Adam Sunshine, and I'm a resident of Portland, Oregon who works for the Hillsdale Farmers Market in SW Portland. I am also an aspiring farmer who hopes to one day grow food for my community.

I am submitting testimony in opposition to HB 4153.

Through my work at a farmers market, I see every week how much effort it takes for farmers to make a living growing food, and how important affordable, protected farmland is to their ability to do so. Direct farm sales and agritourism can be valuable tools for farmers, but only when they are clearly secondary to agriculture and designed to support working farms.

HB 4153 moves away from that balance. By allowing large farm stores and non-farm commercial uses to become primary activities on Exclusive Farm Use land, this bill weakens the protections that were intentionally put in place to keep farmland focused on farming. It opens the door for development that looks agricultural in name, but functions primarily as retail, dining, or event space.

As someone who hopes to farm in the future, I am deeply concerned about how this bill could affect land access and affordability. When farmland becomes attractive for commercial development, land prices rise, speculation increases, and it becomes harder for beginning farmers to get a foothold. This is already one of the biggest barriers facing new, first-generation farmers today, and HB 4153 risks making it worse.

I am also concerned about the long-term impacts on rural communities and neighboring farms. Removing or weakening "good neighbor" standards increases the likelihood of conflicts between farming and non-farm uses, which ultimately puts pressure on farmers – not commercial operators – to adapt or move. Oregon's land use system has been successful because it clearly prioritizes agriculture on farmland and directs commercial development to appropriate areas. HB 4153 undermines that framework and risks eroding the very land base that our local food systems depend on.

I strongly support policies that help farmers sell their products, connect with customers, and remain economically viable. However, those goals can and should be achieved without sacrificing farmland protections or encouraging non-farm development on EFU land.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to vote no on HB 4153 and to continue protecting Oregon's farmland for the people who grow food now — and those of us who hope to do so in the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Adam Sunshine
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