

Friends of French Prairie

Friends of French Prairie
is an Oregon non-profit corporation

PO Box 403 | Donald, Oregon 97020 | www.friendsoffrenchprairie.org

February 3, 2026

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

CC: Rep. Rick Lewis, Sen. Fred Girod

RE: No on HB 4153

Co-Chairs Helm and Owen, and Committee members;

Friends of French Prairie is a local land use advocacy organization in French Prairie, the north end of the Willamette Valley as well as the north end of Marion County. French Prairie is comprised of the highest quality soils in the country, and that is why it is the agriculturally most productive farmland in the state, and why it is Oregon's agricultural heartland.

Many of our members are farmers, and many of them have farm stands. Of note, they have **farm stands**, as presently permitted under law to sell products from their farm and immediately surrounding farms on their farm. There are also in French Prairie, like other parts of the state, a few **farm stores** that are operating outside of and in excess of present law. That's what HB 4153 actually contemplates: statewide allowance of farm stores and concomitant non-farm activities.

That not only makes HB 4153 a study in subterfuge, but a threat to our agricultural lands. This bill would **require** counties to allow 5,000–10,000-square-foot "farm stores," offering shopping, dining, alcoholic beverage service and sales, and ongoing big events such as concerts and weddings in exclusive farm use (EFU) zones. State law currently allows wineries, farm stands, agritourism events, and other commercial and recreational activities in the exclusive farm use zone. But existing law requires agriculture to remain the predominant use of the land—this bill does not.

That is why we oppose this bill and ask you to as well – it's about the question of predominant use of the land!

We ask you to stand behind agriculture and farmland preservation by saying:

- NO to shifting agriculture to the back burner and allowing commercial nonfarm activities as a primary use on farmland.
- NO to incentivizing nonfarm commercial development on less expensive, lower taxed farmland.

- NO to ignoring commercial development impacts on neighboring farms.
- YES to farmer-owned and operated stores, restaurants, and event venues inside our cities and small towns!
- YES to direct sales for farmers under existing farm stand provisions that require farming to remain the predominant use!

Thank you for helping to protect Oregon's farmland and with it, our family farms and the cornerstone of our state's economy.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Benjamin D. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned over a light blue rectangular background.

Ben Williams, President
Friends of French Prairie