

## **In SUPPORT of HB 4153!**

In 1983, I moved from Washington DC to Oregon. I was 15 years old and had never been to a working farm. Much to my delight, my family and I were able to visit farms within easy driving distance to pick things like strawberries and pumpkins, wander among flowers, interact with animals, and enjoy special treats like cider donuts and candy apples. I was in heaven!

42 years later, I continue to have an even more special connection to Oregon farms. I feel incredibly lucky that my own two children were able to spend time at magical places such as Kruger's (now Topaz), Lee Farms, and Bella Organics to learn about farming and the connection to land and where our food comes from. Field trips, pumpkin patches, u-pick berries, and lawn concerts were a huge part of their childhood. I have countless photos and memories of them with blueberry juice smeared across their faces and boots filled with so much mud you couldn't see where they started or ended! What pure joy these experiences provided.

One year ago, I left the corporate world in search of something more meaningful. I found my way to Topaz Farm, where I have been welcomed as part of a larger family committed to sustainable farming practices and creating community where people of all ages gather and connect over music, enjoy incredible food, pet the funny goats and sweet sheep, run and play and climb, talk about what they plan to do with their flat of tomatoes, and find peace in what often feels like an otherwise chaotic and unstable world. The connection to the land, to the food, and hard work has lifted my spirits and filled my heart. I see it, daily, doing the same for so many others.

**I support HB 4153** and ask that the legislation vote in favor. We need your continual support in allowing farms to diversify their businesses into the agritourism space so that they can thrive and remain vital. There are immeasurable benefits to Oregonians in ensuring that farms like Topaz can stay in business, pay living wages to their hard-working employees, and provide truly meaningful and magical experiences to their communities. These farms are what help to make Oregon a truly special place to live.

Thank you for your consideration.

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