

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

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My Name is Zoe Bradbury DeSurra and I am a farmer in Langlois, Oregon - owner and operator of Valley Flora Farm. I am writing today to express my extreme opposition to HB 4153. Farmstands are a vital part of the economic viability of family farms and are essential for connecting the public to agriculture in our state. But HB 4153 would restrict who is allowed to have a farmstand based on acreage and sales, replace current definitions with Farm Stores, and give large landowners privileges at the expense of small farmers in Oregon. This bill is poorly conceived and downright discriminatory. Oregon farmers deserve a better solution.

I care deeply about this because I operate a farmstand that at its founding would not have met the acreage requirements in section 2.2 of the bill. Our farmstand has been in operation for almost 20 years and is a cornerstone of our local food system on the Southern Oregon coast. We have very few vegetable farmers on the Southcoast, but ours has been feeding this community since 1998, slowly scaling up each year. Had we been prohibited from opening a farmstand in those early years it's very likely that our farm would not have survived and blossomed into the successful, mulit-faceted business it is today. Our farmstand is one of the three main pillars that our financial solvency rests on (the other two being community supported agriculture - CSA - and wholesale sales to local stores and restaurants). It's also a magnet for the local community: Over the years, numerous customers have told us that our farmstand is the reason they moved to our community - because they value high quality, seasonal, delicious produce grown with integrity at a human scale.

100% of what we sell is grown on the farm. Because our business has become financially stable, we've been able to make significant investments back into our community: offering extensive Farm to School educational programming; supplying our local foodbanks; improving food access for low-income families; undertaking extensive ecological restoration work in our watershed; and strategically investing in innovative systems to combat climate change. In other words, we are the real deal - not a merch shop or some agritourism roadside attraction. We work hard year-round to feed our local community, guided by a set of core values, and we are proud of the fact that we have been able to remain in business and provide high quality, healthy produce to people up and down the coast for so many years. It wouldn't have

happened without a farmstand. This bill will effectively bar other new farmers from getting a fair start, in a business that's already challenging enough even when all marketing options are available to you.

It is absolutely shocking to me that a proposed bill would so blatantly favor large acreage farms at the expense of smaller acreage ones. Why should large acreage farmers receive extra privileges over small farmers? Why should a small farm be any less legitimate than a large farm when it comes to defining farm use? Why should small farms not have the same opportunities and market access as larger farms? It strikes me as discriminatory and potentially illegal to regulate in such a lopsided and glaringly biased manner.

We are asking you to treat all farms equally, regardless of size or scale. This bill takes away opportunities from small landholders and farms and gives preferential treatment to larger operations so they can host more agritourism events (not necessarily feed more people). This is not good policy-making and it will have long-term negative effects for the agricultural economy, the viability of small farms, and the vitality and resiliency of local food systems in our state. I strongly oppose this bill and encourage you to do so as well.

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