

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

RE: Please OPPOSE HB4153

February 3, 2026

Co-Chairs Rep. Helm and Rep. Owens and members of the committee,

I am a lifelong farmer in Douglas County. My husband and I currently raise wine grapes, sheep, and some timber. Over the years we have raised other crops. We try to be adaptable, but being profitable has always been a challenge. Some years are simply better than others. Like many other farmers, to smooth out the financial ups and downs one of us has always had a side hustle working off farm.

I am surprised to see a committee hearing for HB4153 given that there is limited time in a short session and there are other more pressing matters ahead of the legislature.

Farmland is limited and needs to be protected for future generations. Adding more nonfarm uses is a degradation of the limited supply of the land available for producing food and fiber.

Farm stands are a great way to promote agriculture and offer fresh food to the public, but I do not support adding unlimited commercial sales under the guise of a farm stand. Our small towns with vacant store fronts are struggling and they need the commercial business. It simply makes more sense to locate commercial operations within those towns where the population is located than to have people drive miles to them.

To add insult to injury these farm stores will be a use permitted outright without consideration for any negative effects on neighboring lands. There is already a process for farm stands and agritourism allowing most of the uses in this bill. Please leave the commercial aspects off farmland.

I cannot imagine that lenders will be jumping at the chance to loan money for a “farm store”, especially to a struggling farmer, or that any other investors will be too excited at investing in a “farm store” given the risk and the percentage of new businesses that fail. It would seem to me that this bill would benefit only a very few that already have money to burn or an established farm stand while creating irreparable damage to the protection of farmland for farm uses.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Shelley Wetherell
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