

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

From: Dean Moberg, Principal – Gash Gold Vermilion Natural Resources Consulting, LLC

Date: Tuesday, February 3, 2026

RE: Opposition to HB-4153, the “Farm Stores” Bill

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, esteemed members of the Committee:

I write today in strong opposition to HB-4153, the “Farm Stores Bill.”

For over 50 years I have worked on farms or with farmers to help them achieve their goals. I now own and operate a small consulting firm that provides technical information to Oregon farms to help them plan and implement conservation projects that conserve soil and water resources, improve wildlife habitat, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. When I was younger, I worked on three farms that had small farm stands where we sold the produce we grew.

I am also a member of the Cedar Mill Farmers Market Board and an elected director on the Tualatin Soil and Water Conservation District Board. My testimony here is on my behalf alone and not on behalf of any board on which I serve.

HB-4153 does not help farmers. It helps developers and those who would establish commercial grocery stores and food outlets on farmland. The reasons for opposing HB-4153 include:

- A quick review of testimony submitted in support of the bill reveals that some Oregonians have been misled into believing that the bill supports farm **stands**. It does not. Farm stands are already allowed under state law and provide a great place for folks to meet the people who grow the produce they sell. Instead, HB-4153 allows farm **stores** (essentially rural grocery stores), which would be able to sell a wide variety of products, many of which are not produced at that farm or even nearby farms.
- The bill would allow large permanent structures to accommodate these stores on land that otherwise could produce crops. This would not only take good farmland out of production, but it would also make it difficult for new or existing farmers to buy land as commercial interests bid up the cost of farmland to establish their stores.
- The proposed bill is poorly written and lacks clarity in several places:
 - Section 2(1)d states that “Local agricultural area means Oregon or an adjacent county in California, Idaho, Nevada or Washington...” It is disingenuous to pretend that the entire state constitutes a local agricultural area.
 - Section 2(3)c does not require beverages and prepared foods to be made from local agricultural sources.
 - Section 2(4) states that food and beverage services sold for onsite consumption in farm stores cannot operate as a café or restaurant, but the bill provides no information to distinguish a farm store selling hamburgers from a restaurant in town selling hamburgers.

- There may be minor updates needed to existing farm stand rules in Oregon, but those can be resolved with the help of the Oregon Department of Agriculture Farm Stand Rule Making Committee. Legislation is not needed for this, and I humbly suggest that the legislature might better focus on budgets and funding during this short session.

HB-4153 would harm farmers.

It is not needed.

Parts of it are unclear and poorly written.

Please join me in opposing HB-4153.

Thank you for taking my testimony, and thank you for your service to Oregon