

Submitter: Michelle Valentino

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

I am a community member in Gold Beach. I am writing to express my opposition to HB 4153. Farm stands have been an essential source of quality produce and other locally made items in the small coastal communities of Curry County. HB 4153 would restrict who is allowed to have a farm stand and give large landowners privileges at the expense of small farm stands in Oregon.

One of the things I most appreciate about living in a small coastal community is that it has given me the chance to build relationships with local business owners, especially farmers. The farms with farm stands in Curry County offer many varieties of produce not available in grocery stores and educational opportunities for those wanting to understand how more about growing and producing food. At one stand in the Port Orford area, you can see close up the truly free range chickens who provide the eggs sold there. At another in Langlois, you can choose from among heirloom apples and varieties of squash and tomatoes that have so much more flavor and nutrients than comparable grocery store products. These stands and others would not meet the acreage requirements in Section 2.2 of the bill.

Small farm stands offer a chance for community members to engage with local farmers on a very personal level and enrich the life of the community. The small farm stands also provide access to the freshest possible and often the most delicious produce. They can grow things that are simply not possible to produce in a large scale commercial operation. They contribute a lot to our physical health as well as the fabric of the community. They need to have the same opportunities to sell their produce as larger farms. It is unfair to place any higher burden on the smallest farms, who work very hard to keep their operations running. They offer a value to the community that can't be measured in dollars or acreage.

This bill reduces the opportunities for small landholders and farms in order for larger operations to host more events. The role of farm stands should not be primarily for agritourism events. This bill would adversely and disproportionately impact smaller communities and their local farms who offer so much and are an integral part of the food supply. Please do not take away this substantial portion of their livelihood. Find a better solution.