

Submitter: Clark Kocurek

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Dear members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My name is Clark Kocurek, I am a community member and supporter of small-scale agriculture and fishing in my area. I am writing today to express my opposition to HB 4153, which would reduce access for myself and my community to healthful, local farm produce. I request that this bill is either allowed to die in committee, or is heavily revised for the following reasons:

1.) HB 4153 would reduce my community's access to healthful, traceable, local produce. My wife and I shop at small farm stands as part of our regular grocery plans, and shop at tiny "honor system" farm stands during seasonal peaks for cranberries, eggs, and cut flowers. High quality produce can be difficult to find in rural supermarkets, but is readily available at our local farm stands. We shop at three (3) farm stands that would not meet the acreage requirements listed in section 2.2 of this bill. Losing these farm stands would damage our surprisingly high-quality diet, our community, and our local resilience we enjoy with a short supply-chain. Without our local farm stands, we would need to drive approximately 100 miles round/trip to access a supermarket with similar quality produce, to say nothing of the community bonds and neighborly chit-chat we enjoy at our farm stands.

2.) HB 4153 appears to de-legitimize small farm operations, which are a historically important resource. In America and the world at large, small family farms working a few acres have long been the norm, rather than the exception. Large scale commercial agriculture is still a relatively new invention (<100 years) in the 5,000+ year history of human agriculture. During times of stress - war, famine, environmental or financial strain - a reversion to small farms and even home gardening has proven invaluable. It seems short-sighted to take any action that would reduce the resilience of small agricultural producers.

3.) Agritourism events are fun and fine in their own right, but are not a suitable replacement for a direct-to-consumer farm sales to locals who are looking for dinner rather than a tourist attraction. Small farm stands are a legitimate way to feed one's family top-quality foods at reasonable prices without middle-men taking a slice at each step of the supply chain. This improves revenue for small family farms in rural Oregon, which is a challenging place to find traditional employment.

4.) This bill seems to strengthen the legitimacy of large operations who already have other advantages: greater collateral for raising capital, higher production through-put, and stronger lobbying. I submit that Oregon's tapestry of small farms should receive equal or greater privileges than large acreage operations.

5.) Economically, we should be encouraging people to diversify their income and share their surplus with the community, which is engaging with these producers on a purely voluntary basis. This arrangement benefits all parties, and it is illogical to apply a minimum requirement to this economic driver as long as safety standards are met. Small, steady growth is sustainable, can be done without taking on debt, and is commendable at any scale.

I encourage the committee to truly think through how this bill would negatively impact rural Oregonians, our communities, and the small farms that benefit families and consumers alike. HB 4153 is a bad deal and a better solution must be found.

Thank you,
Clark Kocurek