

Submitter: Kim Foster

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

As a resident of North Curry County and enthusiastic supporter of the tourism industry, I appreciate the intent to support agricultural producers and diversify farm income through agrotourism.

However, I am gravely concerned that the structure of HB 4153 pushes out our smallest farms, and creates a significant incentive to site large retail stores and restaurant-like uses on land zoned for Exclusive Farm Use (EFU), rather than in established commercial areas near cities.

This bill moves well beyond supporting traditional, hyper local farm stands and creates a strong incentive to instead site retail stores and restaurant-like uses on Exclusive Farm Use land because it is cheaper, taxed at farm-use value, and located outside city commercial regulations. Commercial entities could easily take advantage of lower tax assessments and buy up cheap farm land to develop into event venues and retail outlets without ever intending to meaningfully farm the land in the first place.

In our region, small farm operations such as Valley Flora and Wild Woods Gypsy show how small farm retail can succeed and feed our neighbors with high quality local produce, but this bill risks making this vital agricultural use secondary to the non-farm commercial use, pushing them out because they do not meet the outrageous minimum requirements.

If broadly adopted, that shift could materially change the landscape of rural Oregon, kill small farms, siphon off precious resources like ground water away from true farm use, normalize permanent commercial footprints on farmland, and erode the original purpose of EFU zoning that makes rural Oregon a paradise on earth.

I urge reconsideration of the minimum size and income thresholds and commercial allowances to ensure agriculture remains the number one, primary use of these lands, while still supporting small farmstand operations.

Kim