

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens, Vice-Chair Finger McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My Name is Susan Harrower, and I am a community member in Bandon. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to HB 4153. Farm stands are a vital part of connecting the public with our food system and building an understanding of what it takes to go from field to fork. But HB 4153 would restrict who is allowed to have a farm stand, replace current definitions with Farm Stores, and give large land owners privileges at the expense of small farm stands in Oregon. We need to find a better solution.

I care about this because I moved to Bandon about 2 ½ years ago from the central valley in California. Having fresh fruits and vegetables was at my fingertips basically for my whole life, even from the chain grocery stores, until I moved here. Now, my only option for buying these essential food items is from the local grocery stores in town or the small farm stands within a few miles from Bandon. We have two spatially small grocery stores in Bandon, McKays and Rays, and Coos Bay's (35 miles away) grocers not much bigger. Their produce departments are very small and frankly if you buy a "fresh" vegetable, you must cook it within 2 days, or it will be limp and turning old.

I have found I can buy good fresh produce from the small farm stands that are within a few miles of Bandon, that is wholesome, tasty and really fresh! Taking away the ability of these small farm operators to sell their products to locals and tourists would deprive those of us who live in remote areas from ever having good wholesome essential foods. Our communities depend upon tourists who come for a few days and stay in rentals and like to cook their own meals. They tend to stop on their way up the coast and buy produce, baked goods, jams and other farm fresh items from the small farms stands along Hwy 101.

Depriving small farmers from being allowed to sell their products hurts local rural communities in so many ways. They provide small farmers with a source of income that helps them continue to farm, which is a dying industry that provides essential fresh produce to local community members and to Oregon's tourists.

I ask you not to place a higher burden on the smallest farms. This bill takes away opportunities from small land holders and farms in order for larger operations to be able to host more events. I don't understand the reasoning and believe there must be a way to protect all of our interests.

Thank you,
Susan Harrower
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