

Submitter: Barbara Kahl
On Behalf Of: Farmers
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Testimony in Strong Opposition to HB 4153 – Relating to Farm Stores

Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Owens, and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water:

My name is Barbara, and I live on a family farm in Yamhill County, Oregon—one of the state's most productive agricultural areas, famous for its wine grapes, berries, nuts, and diversified crops. I've faced firsthand the relentless pressures of urbanization creeping into our rural landscape: skyrocketing land prices driven by luxury estates, boutique hotels, and non-farm developments that make it nearly impossible for working farmers to afford or expand operations.

Yamhill County has seen some of the highest rates of nonfarm use permits on EFU land in Oregon, leading to conflicts with neighboring farms, fragmented parcels, and a real threat to our agricultural economy.

I strongly oppose HB 4153. This bill is not a lifeline for farmers—it's a dangerous step toward commercializing and ultimately urbanizing Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zones. It replaces modest farm stands with permissions for large "farm stores" up to 10,000 square feet (using existing buildings), allowing up to 25% unrelated retail, commercial kitchens, restaurants, alcohol sales, and unlimited agri-tourism events like concerts, weddings, corporate retreats, petting zoos, and amusement-style activities.

Counties would be forced to permit these uses without strong safeguards ensuring agriculture remains primary, or that the operator is actually a farmer.

This invites outside investors and speculators to buy low-tax EFU land, add token farm activity, and convert it into high-traffic commercial venues.

In Yamhill County—already strained by luxury non-farm developments near Portland—this would accelerate land price inflation, push out small and beginning farmers, and create noise, traffic, and pollution conflicts that disrupt genuine farming. It's not about economic stability for landowners like me; it's government overreach that strips farmers of control of farming practices and violates private property rights by mandating non-farm commercialization on land zoned exclusively for agriculture.

HB 4153 hides its true agenda: eroding Oregon's landmark land use protections

(Goal 3) and opening the door to de facto urbanization.

Without requirements tying uses tightly to farm viability, it favors big operations over family farms, disadvantages those below income/acreage thresholds, and risks turning productive soil into entertainment districts. We've already lost too much farmland to sprawl and non-farm pressures—don't compound it.

This bill is unfixable in a short session: too controversial, full of loopholes, and tailor-made for specific interests rather than broad farm support. Groups like 1000 Friends of Oregon, Friends of Family Farmers, and Central Oregon LandWatch oppose it for these reasons.

I urge you to kill HB 4153 outright. Protect working farms, keep land affordable for agriculture, and preserve our rural way of life. We don't want to become an urban mall for pretend farmers and tourists that will crush real farmers rights to farm. Yamhill County—and all of Oregon's farmers—deserve better.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Kahl
Yamhill County, Oregon