

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

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Casey Henley, and I am writing in strong support of House Bill 4153.

I live and work in a coastal Oregon community where agriculture, tourism, and small locally owned businesses are deeply interconnected. HB 4153 represents an important modernization of Oregon's land-use laws that will help preserve working farms, strengthen rural economies, and maintain public access to local food and farm experiences that define our state.

Oregon has long been a national leader in protecting farmland through Exclusive Farm Use zoning. HB 4153 respects that legacy while recognizing a simple reality: today's family farms must diversify income to survive. Rising labor costs, weather volatility, compliance expenses, and narrow margins have made it increasingly difficult for small and mid-sized farms to remain financially viable through crop production alone. Allowing farm stores and expanded agritourism opportunities gives farmers practical tools to stay in business and keep their land in agricultural use rather than selling it for development.

HB 4153 provides clarity and consistency that farmers urgently need. Current rules surrounding farm stands and agritourism are often confusing, inconsistent across counties, and costly to navigate. By creating a clear framework allowing counties to approve farm stores and associated agritourism uses, this bill reduces unnecessary legal risk while still preserving local government oversight. Counties retain authority to regulate traffic, safety, sanitation, and neighborhood compatibility, ensuring responsible implementation.

This bill also supports Oregon consumers and communities. Farm stores and agritourism create direct connections between farmers and the public, allowing families to purchase locally grown food, participate in educational experiences, and support rural economies. These direct-to-consumer opportunities allow farmers to retain more of the value of their products, strengthening the long-term stability of Oregon's agricultural sector.

Without modernization, many farms face an increasingly difficult financial future. When working farms fail, the land often leaves agricultural production entirely. HB 4153 helps prevent that outcome by giving farmers responsible ways to adapt while

maintaining Oregon's strong farmland protections.

Oregon's agricultural identity depends on our ability to balance preservation with economic sustainability. HB 4153 achieves that balance by updating outdated regulations while maintaining safeguards and local control.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to support HB 4153 and help ensure that Oregon's family farms, rural communities, and local food systems continue to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Casey Henley
Nehalem, Oregon