

Submitter: Polly Wood

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Co-Chairs Helm and Owens and Members of the Committee,

Please do not consider a complex, misleading and controversial land use bill like HB-4153 in the 2026 short session.

HB-4153 simply goes too far. Farm stands and numerous agritourism uses are already allowed on farm land and do plenty to support profit margins on farms, educate and build relationships with customers, and help small and mid-scale farms thrive.

HB-4153 doesn't protect farmers - it favors commercial operators, replacing modest farm stands with large, permanent farm stores that can allocate 95% or more of the store space to retail items and prepared food and beverages that have no connection to the farm.

For instance, non farmers can buy or lease farm land to set up these stores and only use a small part of the land for farm use. This opportunity attracts well capitalized speculators, developers and destination businesses. It incentivizes a commercial investor who wants to take advantage of cheaper land and lower taxes and fees than businesses in our struggling rural communities. Perversely, over time this continued commercialization of the farm zone increases farm land prices beyond what new farmers can afford or existing production farmers can buy or lease to grow their operations.

These large scale Farm Stores will cover some of our best lands with buildings, parking lots, play grounds, driveways and septic fields as well as creating incompatibility and traffic congestion in our rural communities and land use issues that production farmers can not anticipate and did not create.

HB-4153 prevents counties requiring an assessment of impacts to the rural community:

Note that in Section 2 (5)(a) of the bill: A local government with land use jurisdiction over the site of the farm store may impose siting standards for the farm stores...

The use of the word may instead of the word shall - removes the requirement that

counties accurately assess the impacts on rural communities. Oregon counties' hands are further tied in Section 2 (5) (b) A county may not apply siting standards in a manner that directly prohibits or unreasonably frustrates the siting and operation of a farm store under this section.

HB-4153 is misleading in its clever wording.

In Section 2 (B) (b) HB-4153 proposes the "Farm-to-table meal as part of a fee-based dining experience" which is a tricky way of slipping restaurant activity into the farm land. Many restaurants in rural and urban communities also advertise a 'farm to table experience' in practice and ethos. Also, as a former culinary professional I must point out that "fee-based" is another term for "prix-fix" or "fixed-price" that restaurants often offer instead of or in addition to having a printed menu. This still makes them a restaurant (dining establishment) whether they operate by reservation or are open to the public. Whether they are called "farm to table experiences "or "fee-based dining experience" in HB-4154 - they are actually restaurants in the farm land that will unfairly compete with the in-town businesses which paid commercial prices for land or rent and pay city taxes and fees.

Farm land is for farming. Modest sized farm stands and many agritourism uses are already allowed.

Please no HB-4153 Farm Store Bill in the short session.

Sincerely,

Polly Wood