

Submitter: Erin Lapsansky

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 Erin Lapsansky. I am a hazelnut farmer in the Willamette Valley and I also work professionally as an Organic Certification Officer with Oregon Tilth, where I review and enforce compliance with state and federal agricultural standards. I am writing to share concerns about HB 4153 from both a farmer's and a regulator's perspective.

I strongly support Oregon farmers' need to diversify income and engage directly with their communities. Farm stands, value-added products, and educational activities are important tools for keeping farms economically viable. However, I believe HB 4153, as currently written, risks undermining those goals by favoring farm size and capital over farming activity and intent, while unintentionally disadvantaging small and beginning farmers.

From my experience as a farmer, direct-to-consumer sales are often the first and most accessible step for a new or small operation. Simple farm stands—sometimes seasonal, sometimes honor-system—allow farmers to test markets, build relationships, and generate supplemental income without large upfront investment. HB 4153 replaces this long-standing model with a new “farm store” framework that is based on acreage thresholds and income minimums, not on what the farm is actually producing or selling. In practice, this means that some of the smallest, most diversified, and most community-oriented farms may no longer qualify to sell their own products on their own land.

From my role at Oregon Tilth, I also see the importance of clear purpose-based standards. Current farm stand and agritourism rules emphasize that agricultural production must remain the primary use, with retail and events remaining secondary. HB 4153 shifts this balance by removing revenue-based limits and relying primarily on square footage caps. This change may allow operations that function primarily as retail or event venues—rather than working farms—to operate on Exclusive Farm Use land, which raises legitimate concerns about long-term land use integrity and consistency with Oregon's land-use goals.

I do want to acknowledge positive elements of the bill. Recognizing processed farm products, educational activities, and farm-to-table meals reflects the realities of modern farming. These concepts are not the problem. The concern is that the bill

expands these uses without adequately protecting the simplest and most accessible forms of farm commerce, or ensuring that agriculture remains the primary driver of these operations.

I respectfully urge the Legislature to consider amendments that:

Explicitly preserve simple farm stands for small and beginning farms without acreage or income thresholds.

Tie eligibility and accountability to farming activity and product origin, rather than land size alone.

Maintain a clear requirement that farm-based retail and events remain secondary to agricultural production.

Oregon's strength has always been its ability to support both innovation and stewardship. With targeted changes, HB 4153 could achieve its stated goal of supporting farm viability without excluding the very farmers who rely most on direct sales to survive.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
Erin Lapsansky
Hazelnut Farmer, Willamette Valley
Organic Certification Officer, Oregon Tilth