

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

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 Jesse Berkey and I am a farmer in Lebanon, Oregon. 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 small and very small farmers produce goods and services our society wants and needs. We have customers drive in as far away as Seattle and Portland /Bend. These towns are over 120 miles round trip. These travelers promote economic growth across Oregon. Small farms need a chance to have a road side stand without changing the definitions and having capitol /income requirements. I farm on less than 10 AC. My irrigation system cost 30K+ new in 2006. My power supply to run this system cost 20K to install. My startup costs with my plants was 32K. These are just some of my investments on my 5AC. Using your numbers, I would not be able to have a stand for 10+ years if I were to start now from scratch as I did in 2005/6. It took 3 years until I could see my first crop. I had to float the (-100k+) dollars over that time just to get to my first harvest.

Who do you know that is willing to put in that time and effort and risk, and not be able to have a roadside stand, or if they do, be "illegal" about it. Probably nobody, if you think about it. Why target and prevent small operators from taking that risk?

This bill seems to be aimed at hurting the small farmer, the one who wants to grow food to support their family, and sell it from the front porch all season long. Why? It seems large corporation farms - with AC+80 want to control, sell foods to wholesale outlets and disconnect people from the food sources. Additionally, we small / new and beginning farmers would lose out on revenue, and customers. Farms that are very small, growing in a foot print of 800 sq ft to 1/2 AC have the ability to produce revenue of up to 10K annually. This seems minor compared to 80+ AC, but means something to the individuals growing in these spaces. This bill would likely be enough to "squash" the dreams of farmers from taking risks and starting new ventures like this. When the grocery stores shelves are empty or a COVID type situation exists, a

small farm, even .5AC is vital to feeding the community.

Lastly, small farms - 10 or less AC still provide summer jobs to youth/teens and those that want to work. Where/how does a 14 yr old learn a work ethic? By showing up at 6:30 daily for 5 hours a day, for 3-6 days a week. The smiles on their faces and the plans they make to pay for their first cars, cell phone bill, or ROTH IRA make it worth it to keep going as a small time farm. This bill would potential mean cuts to these jobs for the community and some would not have the opportunity to learn these valuable skills and become contributing members of their society because many farms would not RISK starting given the requirements and inability to have a road side stand.

This bill places the highest 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. This is not a good bargain for Oregon and a better deal must be found.

Thank you,

Jesse Berkey
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