



SAVE HELVETIA
13260 NW Bishop Rd
Hillsboro, OR 97124
February 4, 2026

*Advancing policies, leaders and actions that
protect Helvetia's treasured resources.*

Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water

Opposition to HB 4153

Dear Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and members of the committee,

Save Helvetia is a private non-profit advocacy organization that has been working for over 15 years to protect farm and forestlands in Washington County. We organized in 2010 during the Urban and Rural Reserves planning process, studying lands in and around the Helvetia area, submitting testimony to Washington County, Metro, and LCDC. We studied the reserves laws and rules, submitting excellent "citizen science" regarding the area we lived and worked in. When we submitted testimony, we were largely rebuffed at over 35 hearings. Still confident in our position, we joined several appellants taking it to the Oregon State Court of Appeals. The points we raised in testimony, along with 1000 Friends of Oregon, were eventually embraced by the court's ruling, which rejected and remanded Washington County's proposed urban and rural reserves plan.

Today, we speak to you in **Opposition to HB 4153**. This bill would expand farm stand to farm store and disconnect the products from grown/raised on farms to sales of any items, food preparation from any source, and entertainment events unrelated to agriculture. The result would be a huge barnful of complicated, negative consequences for farmland, farming, and rural neighborhoods.

When agricultural lands become open venues for markets, restaurants, concerts, and wedding venues, competing with urban venues for products, meals, and events, it subjects the rural agricultural areas to actual and increased **threats to farming**. Many growers work hard to **minimize dust** on their crops. When you entice urban traffic onto rural roads and possible dirt roads, you **raise dust**. You also risk the **importation of noxious weeds**. Many of our grass seed growers (supplying 90% of the world demand)

are graded on the purity of their crops. Grass seed buyers fly helicopters over crops to assess purity of fields. Most rural agricultural lands are outside the zones for enhanced law enforcement, which means **violations are unlikely to be addressed**. When farmlands become venues for all commercial enterprises, **rural roads are not built for urban traffic**. **Gravel shoulders** contribute to many roll over accidents in rural areas. When you offer entertainment venues in the agricultural areas, many urban drivers, having celebrated and become **impaired drivers**, are more dangerous in zones without sufficient enforcement. Farm soils covered in gravel to create **parking lots, are irretrievably lost to farming**, while businesses reach for the profits of unrestrained commercial activities. Regulated and tempered activities are already allowed under winery and agri-tourism laws. This gross expansion and the profits it would engender would contribute to the speculation of farmland values, pricing real farmers out of the resource they need most: farmland.

In our area north of Hillsboro, we have experienced other conflicts. Urban type **lighting** has actually hastened the maturation of crops under halo of the lights, causing crop loss for farmers. Where urban **concrete** (such as curbs or walkways) borders fields, it endangers farm machinery and therefore, operators. We have seen urban traffic in rural areas thwart the movement of farm machinery. Farmers have taken to gathering in **convoy**s to move from field to field or to market. Many farmers are forced to adjust their work in response to event traffic. Some **right-to-farm** practices aren't event friendly. When farmers fertilize or spray herbicides, those nearby may be affected. When harvest time arrives, dust gets in the air and road visibility decreases.

Don't open this BARN DOOR!

Oppose HB 4153!

Robert Bailey Secretary for Save Helvetia
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