

Submitter: Nicole Cousino

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

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 Nicole Cousino and I am a the co-owner of Newledo Exploration Hub, a farm located just outside Newport. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to HB 4153. Lincoln County needs to increase local food sovereignty. Small organic farms, such as ours, play such a vital role in meeting this need. But small farms, in order to survive, need multiple channels for connecting with their customers and community. 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'm truly shocked that the authors of this bill failed to recognize the significant role that small farms play in our overall food security needs. And more importantly, how could the authors be unaware of the great need we have as a nation, to bring more people into agriculture. Our current farmers are aging out and we are LOSING key practioners to grow our food.

Small scale biointensive farming, with diversified revenue streams, ensuring the farmers make a livable wage, is an ever expanding sector of agriculture in Oregon. But to continually bring in new farmers, we need to make it financially viable. Please wake up and realize we need to be helping these small, independently owned farms and making it more attractive to new farmers.

Our farm is 18 acres. Of that only 5 acres is farmable for vegetable crops and orchards. We serve a meaningful role in food security at the Central Oregon Coast. But we need additional means for selling our products to customers, to ensure economic solvency at the farm. Why do you want to penalize us, and other farms like Newledo? Why not create healthy pathways for food security and a vibrant agriculture sector across the state, ensuring all producers are supported?

Please make the needed revisions that ensure this bill provides equitable support across all scales of farming. There is absolutely no reason you have not to!

Thank you,

Nicole Cousino
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