

Submitter: Carrie Thomas

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

I am a small acreage farmer in Hood River County, and I urge you to protect Oregon's vital agricultural lands by voting NO on HB 4153!

HB 4153 creates unfair competition for real farms. Under HB 4153 a "farm store" can earn most of its money from food, retail, and events. This paves the way for farming to become secondary, or even just symbolic.

Direct sales already work — HB 4153 isn't needed. Current law already allows farm stands, U-pick operations, agritourism with clear limits, farmers markets and CSAs, and value-added processing. These tools support farmers while keeping farming the primary use and without turning farmland into commercial destinations.

HB 4153 is unfair to small businesses. Restaurants, brew pubs and cafes in rural centers pay commercial prices for land, pay commercial property taxes, and do not have acres of land to convert from farm use to lawn areas for customers. Small rural business and commercial districts die when farmland becomes de-facto commercial land.

With this bill, our farmland would metastasize into high-traffic commercial businesses with which those in the appropriate zones cannot compete. That kind of sprawl is the opposite of everything that Oregon's land use system was designed for.

HB 4153 is unfair to rural residential landowners. We have a reasonable expectation that adjoining Exclusive Farm Use zoned land will be used for farming, not for retail stores, commercial kitchens, restaurants, concerts, amusement parks, zoos, and entertainment venues. We expect and accept the necessary noise and inconvenience that comes with being part of a farming community. But rural residential landowners – and our farming neighbors – should not be forced to deal with non-farm uses that belong in commercial and manufacturing zones.