

5 February 2026

To: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

From: Jo Erikson

Re: Oppose HB 4153 (Allows counties to approve farm stores, instead of farm stands, as nonfarm use on lands zoned for farm use)

Dear 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 Jo Erikson and I am a farm owner / operator and community member in Corvallis, Oregon. I am writing 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. Our certified organic specialty seed family farm does not currently have a farm stand but under these proposed rules, we would no longer have the option to if we wanted.

To put it simply, this bill is bad for small farms because:

- Small farms have the highest burden of eligibility by acreage in production;
- Small farms are the only ones who have to prove farm income in order to qualify;
- A farm property of under 10 acres cannot qualify for a permit until minimally their third year of business while larger land owners can qualify right away.

Farm stands have always been a pathway for folks to introduce themselves to a community. They have represented direct agriculture in a way that is missing from many people's understanding of the food system. Farm stands allow new, beginning and small farmers to carve a niche for themselves without having to compete with larger farms in forums like wholesale markets, institutional sales, or even farmers markets. Very small farms are drawn to farm stand sales because they are creating their own market and they represent an opportunity for your community to decide to support you simply because they think your stewardship is valid, they believe in how you take care of the land and produce food, flowers, or other products, and they want you to exist. They are also a boon to folks who are scaling their businesses, have to maintain off farm income to continue their health coverage or pay their bills, are only selling a little over their subsistence production or who simply want to pay the costs of doing the conservation work on their own farm. This bill tells all those farms that what they are doing is invalid and not as important as farms who are able to scale production to a certain arbitrary level.

This bill takes away opportunities from small land holders and farms in order for larger operations to be able to host more events. I am asking you not to implement a higher burden on small farms. This is not a good bargain for Oregon and will cause more harm than good to local food systems.

I urge you to oppose HB 4153.

Thank you,

Jo Erikson
Avoca Seed
Corvallis, OR