

To the 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 Laura Bennett and I am a Farmer and Farmstand Operator in Corvallis, Oregon. I am writing to you today to express my opposition to HB 4153. Throughout the development of this bill I've been in favor of what I see to be a handful of great productive changes. However, the restriction in this bill of who is allowed to have a farmstand is so fundamentally detrimental to farmers and to our communities that in my opinion it overrides everything.

I care about this bill because I currently farm and operate a farm stand that would not meet the acreage requirements in section 2.2 of the bill, and we're not a small operation. This is a property that we bought at this specific location along a major highway to create a business that revolves around a thriving farm stand.

We have so many families who come in for their weekly groceries, kiddos gobbling up fresh strawberries, construction workers looking for fresh Oregon fruits on a lunch break in the summer when the only other thing around is a gas station, tourists exploring quaint little spots like ours that feel quintessentially "Oregon." Where many farmers market shoppers typically tend to be wealthier families living in urban areas, farm stands are beacons of fresh food access in rural neighborhoods for working class households.

To exclude the small-scale farmer from being able to sell their produce off their farms would take away food that families depend on throughout the state and put a significant percentage of small farms out of business. Oregon's farmstands are at the heart of its charm, and HB 4153 would truly devastate my business and so many others in our communities.

Small farms need to have the same opportunities to sell their produce as larger farms, and it doesn't make sense for the bigger burden to land on the smallest farms either. We need to find a better solution. This bill basically takes away opportunities from small farms in order for larger operations to be able to host more events. This is not a good look for Oregon and we have to find a better deal.

Thank you,

Laura Bennett
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