

To: Chair and Members of the House Committee on Agriculture
From: Oregon Agritourism Partnership President Claire Zielinski
Date: 2/4/26
RE: Neutral for HB 4153 – Protecting Oregon’s Farm Experiences



Oregon Agritourism Partnership (OAP) is a 501c3 Oregon non-profit organization established in August, 2014 to assist producers with state-wide opportunities that: connect the public with Oregon farms, ranches, wineries, other agriculture value-added operations and the people who operate them, and agricultural and farm-related events in order to build relationships and enhance knowledge, familiarity, and appreciation for farming, and to establish a sense of place. Through our members we provide the public with easier access to sources of fresh, wholesome foods as well as local sources of plants, fiber and farm animals; we also provide fun and educational experiences that will encourage families to get outdoors and enjoy spending time together.

The OAP is also known as the Oregon Farm Loop (OFL). Our organization has a website, social media, and large email network. We use these tools to promote and encourage guests to visit our many members across the state of Oregon. OFL currently has 26 members from nurseries, farm animal experiences, u-pick, seasonal events, and more. These members have agritourism operations. Agritourism is where farmers throw open their barn doors and say, "Come on in and experience the real deal!" It's all about blending agriculture with tourism to create fun, educational, and hands-on activities on working farms. Agritourism is about creating a connection between people and the land, showcasing the value of farmers, and boosting the local economy!

It's not just about buying stuff; it's about immersing visitors in the farm vibe, connecting with nature, learning where food comes from, and meeting the farmers who grow it. It gives farmers a chance to show off their operations, share their know-how, and teach folks about agriculture. The learning is not just a one way street, our members learn just as much from their guests through visiting and experiences. It reflects through changes in the business; members have changed their accessibility after meeting and learning first person the needs of their guests. Adjusting educational tours to work around classroom curriculums. The relationship of learning and growing through agritourism shows in both the farmer and the guest.

In regards to HB4153 (House Bill 4153). Oregon Agritourism Partnership supports agritourism. Many of our members have expressed strong positive feelings towards HB4153. We encourage the committee, and all representatives and senators to educate themselves about agritourism in our great state of Oregon. HB4153 will have a large impact on Oregon agritourism “approximately 4,000 of the total number of 18,679 farms in the Willamette Valley may be engaged in agritourism.”(Sorte et al., 2024) More than just farm owners are involved with agritourism operations. In the Willamette Valley alone “the employment impact, including full- and part-time jobs, is near 11,000 jobs — calculated from the combined total of agritourism employment.” (Sorte et al., 2024). This data is only for the Willamette Valley, as we do not have

numbers or estimates of how many people are employed by agritourism across the entire state. Just from the Willamette Valley, approximately 11,000 jobs is no small number of constituents potentially affected by the outcome of HB4153.

On a wide spread national comparison “Oregon ranks 23rd in agritourism farm count and 29th in the percentage of farms participating in agritourism.” (Comerford & Fery, 2024). Compared to other States around the nation we are staying in the middle in terms of farm agritourism percentages. Showing that there is room for growth as states in similar sized states like Colorado (in the top five). “The 507 agritourism farms in Oregon earned \$19 million in total income from agritourism and recreational services, ranking 22nd in the U.S. On a per-farm basis, this amounts to roughly \$38,000 per farm, putting Oregon 31st in the U.S.” (Comerford & Fery, 2024).

Why do we support agritourism? Our organization was founded around supporting agritourism. In 2014 agritourism was having a hard time finding a place for promoting themselves in Regional Destination Management Organizations to Destination Management Organizations and beyond. So, with the support of OSU extension staff a group of agritourism operators founded the OAP to support and promote Oregon's Agritourism industry. Supporting agritourism brings good things for everyone. It helps farmers earn a better living by offering new ways to make income, like farm visits or selling directly to you. This can keep family farms going strong and economically viable. So that they can continue to be family farms and carry on to future generations. When you support agritourism, you also help your local community and economy. These farm businesses can create jobs and bring more visitors to the local area. Ultimately, supporting agritourism helps keep our farms and rural landscapes beautiful and productive for the future. By supporting agritourism you're contributing to something real and valuable right in your own backyard.

In conclusion, Oregon Agritourism Partnership or the Oregon Farm Loop supports the agritourism industry here in Oregon. We hope that all representatives, senators, lobbyists, staff, and lawmakers take the time to learn about agritourism in their local area. The impact it has on the farmers, the people who work for agritourism operations, the impact on Oregon education, the greater economic portfolio of agritourism, and the connections it makes. We encourage all those related to HB4153 to read the articles, studies, and publications cited in this letter, and to go beyond that research.

Thank you,
Claire Zielinski
Oregon Agritourism Partnership President

References:

Sorte, B., Fery, M., & Comerford, A. (2024). An Initial Economic Impact Estimate of Agritourism in Oregon's Willamette Valley. OSU College of Agricultural Sciences.
<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/em-9421-initial-economic-impact-estimate-agritourism-oregons-willamette-valley>

Comerford, A. & Fery, M. (2024). Oregon agriculture by the numbers, part 5: agritourism. OSU Extension Service. <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/oregon-agriculture-numbers-part-5-agritourism>