



Chair Reynolds, Vice Chair Anderson, and members of the committee,

My name is Jayden Ruff, and I am writing on behalf of the South Coast Health Equity Coalition (SCHEC), a Regional Health Equity Coalition serving Coos and Curry Counties. Our work is grounded in health equity, systems change, and community-rooted investment—including the role local food systems play in health, stability, and rural resilience.

I am writing today to oppose **HB 4153**.

At first glance, HB 4153 may sound like a “local food” bill. Many Oregonians want to support farmers. We want more access to local produce. We want our rural communities to thrive. SCHEC shares those goals.

But HB 4153 risks doing the opposite.

HB 4153 expands what is allowed on land zoned for exclusive farm use by allowing counties to approve “farm stores” as a permitted use, including expanded retail sales, prepared foods, and agri-tourism activities such as farm-to-table meals, entertainment, and seasonal events.

This type of expansion doesn’t primarily benefit the small farms that are struggling to survive. It benefits farms and landowners who already have the capital, staffing, marketing reach, and infrastructure to turn farmland into a destination business.

In rural counties like Coos and Curry, we are already seeing the impacts of rising land costs, limited housing, and growing pressure on working families. When farmland becomes more valuable for retail and entertainment, it can create incentives that push small-scale farmers out, accelerate consolidation, and make it harder for new farmers—especially younger farmers and farmers of color—to enter the local food economy.

This bill also shifts the purpose of farm-zoned land away from production and toward commercialization. That can weaken local food systems in the long term by rewarding farms that can become event spaces rather than farms that are growing food for the community.

Local food systems are not just about where we shop. They are about whether rural communities can access fresh food without traveling long distances, whether small farmers can keep land, and whether we can build resilient local supply chains in the face of climate instability and economic uncertainty.

Finally, HB 4153 restricts counties from applying siting standards in a way that “directly prohibits or unreasonably frustrates” the siting and operation of a farm store.

This limits local control and makes it harder for communities to respond to real impacts—such as traffic, safety concerns, noise, and strain on emergency response—in rural areas where services are already stretched thin.

SCHEC supports policies that strengthen small farms and local food access—but HB 4153 risks turning farmland into a commercial loophole that benefits the few, while undermining long-term food sovereignty and rural equity.

We urge the committee to vote NO on HB 4153.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Please feel free to contact me at **678-654-3164** or jayden@southcoastequity.org with any questions.

With deep respect and gratitude,

Sincerely,



Jayden Ruff (she/her)

Director, **South Coast Health Equity Coalition**