

Submitter: Austin Sumpter

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: Opposition to House Bill 4153

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources and Water,

My name is Austin Sumpter. I live in the outskirts of Canby in rural Clackamas County, Oregon, specifically in Senate District 26 and House District 51. I testify today to express my opposition to House Bill 4153, a bill that aims to require Oregon's counties to allow "farm stores" to operate on land designated as exclusive farm use (EFU) zones.

Wineries, farm stands, agritourism events, and other forms of commercial or recreational activities already operate on EFU land within Oregon, all helping showcase the productivity of our state while also generating dollars for local economies. But HB 4153 would compel counties to allow 5,000 to 10,000 square-foot "farm stores" to operate in these kinds of zones, opening businesses offering shopping, dining, alcoholic beverage services, and ongoing events like concerts and weddings on lands that should focus exclusively on agricultural production. HB 4153 would also repeal the "good neighbor" analysis that currently exists for agrotourism permits to ensure events and non-agricultural activities do not compromise other nearby farms. The implementation of this bill will place undue burdens onto smaller farms that have neither the interest nor the financial wherewithal to open their properties up to additional non-agricultural uses, especially if mandated by the state.

House Bill 4153 also fails to provide help or support for farmers who actually want to farm their land. Dubiously, this bill was drafted in consultation with the Oregon Property Owners Association, a special interest group that's been seeking to open farmland to unfettered commercial development for years. Commercial designations require enormous capital costs upfront, prioritizing commercial development over farm productivity. Meanwhile, the bill fails to address the impacts on land affordability and the viability of farmland. Both are crucial to small and beginning family farmers. Especially at a time in which tariffs imposed by the federal government have caused

record-high foreclosures for farms and ranches across America in 2025, how would imposing upfront cost and development requirements like these help farmers get by?

Even though amendments had been offered to try and clean up the bill, all of them are insufficient in addressing the root problems of HB 4153. Any amendments would amount to putting a Band-Aid on a gunshot wound. This bill is a solution in search of a problem, and will decimate many farms across the state if implemented. Many small-scale, family-owned farms will be forced to declare bankruptcy and move out of state if the Legislature dares to pass this. At a time when the Governor has made it a priority to revitalize Oregon's economic activity, forcing this burdensome land-use requirement on Oregon's farms is the last thing that one of our state's leading industries needs. Listen to the bulk of the people testifying to you and allow this bill to die in Committee. Oppose House Bill 4153.