Co-Chair Helm, Owens, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Barb Iverson. I am a co-owner of Iverson Family Farms and one of the founders of Wooden Shoe Tulip Farm. I'm here today to strongly support HB 4153, because quite frankly, family farms in Oregon are running out of options.

My parents bought our farm as newlyweds in 1950. Over the decades, we've grown more than 100 crops and once farmed over 2,500 acres. But the world that supported farms like ours no longer exists. Our canneries are gone. Market consolidation keeps pushing prices down. The average farmer is now over 58 years old. I've worn many hats in my life, but being a farmer has always been the riskiest one.

I've lost both a farm and a nursery to economic conditions. So when we talk about the challenges farmers face, this isn't theoretical to me. The reality is that Oregon agriculture is in an economic crisis. I will take weather risks any day over the growing burden of regulations, taxes, and uncertainty that make it harder every year to stay in business.

Agritourism was never our plan. We started with a roadside stand and a wheelbarrow of tulips just to make ends meet. What changed everything was realizing that instead of keeping six and a half cents on the dollar, we could keep the whole dollar. That difference meant paying employees better, reinvesting in our farm, and strengthening our rural community.

Our farm looks nothing like it did when SB 100 passed 54 years ago—and neither do the farms around us. In the last 50 years, our operation has absorbed ten neighboring farms. Every one of those families had off-farm jobs. Farming is no longer something you can do part time and survive. It requires full commitment and generations of knowledge.

If we want farms to remain in Oregon—not just the land, but the people and the knowledge, then we need policies that reflect today's reality. I want there to be something left for my grandchildren to farm, not just land paved over with houses.

HB 4153 gives family farms a fighting chance. I urge you to support it.