

Submitter: John Zielinski
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water
Measure, Appointment or HB4153
Topic:

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens, and Committee members,

My name is John Zielinski, I am a 4th generation farmer from just NE of Salem. I ask the Committee to Support HB 4153 for many reasons, but mostly because it will impact my farm and my family.

As I mentioned I am a 4th generation farmer, I am also a 3rd generation farmer selling direct to the public. My grandparents started by selling peaches from a card table at the end of their driveway in addition to selling on the wholesale market. My father built a seasonal fruit stand in the 1970's, and my brothers father and I built a new Farm Market in 1992. Things have changed since that card table at the end of my grandparent's driveway. The grocery industry has consolidated making it difficult to wholesale our fruit.

I remember as a child in the 1970's people coming to our farm to buy peaches, apples and pears in bulk. All of our fruit was sold by the box. Society was different then, many homes were supported by one career person and one homemaker. Those homemakers cooked, froze, and canned fruit and vegetables. Today most homes have dual incomes to survive, and due to lack of time and more fruits and vegetables being available year round (imports) people are not preserving food like they have historically. We still boxes of fruit but most is sold in small amounts by the pound. Todays busy consumers are not going to stop at a farm store for just a few pounds of produce. To stay in business we need to be able to offer a wide variety of produce and items that compliment the produce we sell.

Our family farm would not have survived with my father, two brothers and I, if we had not had our farm market. It has been a stable backbone for the entire business. We are not big farmers, it was a struggle to transition from a farm that supported my father to a farm that supported him and three adult sons who joined the business. Without our Farm Market and some expansion of the growing operations we would not all be farmers today.

I buy produce from local farms through out the year, even in the winter, Through the summer I buy from over 30 local farmers, their produce was not grown on my farm, but help to support other local farmers, many who have their own farm markets as well. Why not grow it all myself? Other farmers and myself would rather specialize in certain crops and grow a few things well, not be a "Jack of all trades and master of

none". We specialize in tree fruit, my neighbors specialize in vegetables, berries, or melons. I help them and they help me to be successful. Today's consumers want to make one or two stops when shopping for food, not come to my farm for peaches, another farm for pickling cucumbers, another farm for berries, and another farm for corn.

Our farm has a pumpkin patch each fall giving the public a chance to have an educational experience with agriculture. We had 8,000 school children visit our farm last October, for the most it was their first interaction with where their food comes from. School children go on a hay ride, pick an apple, pick a pumpkin, walk through a corn maze in the shape of Oregon where there are 60+ signs about Oregon's agriculture industry, they visit farm animals in our petting zoo and finish with a cup of apple cider and an apple cider donut. This is a huge undertaking, I employ a number of retired people to guide tours and serve cider and donuts, I pay insurance, I have tractors, wagons, tents and more to support our activities. Should I be limited to only selling the pumpkins from the field? Admission fees make all of these activities possible. But activities under existing rules are limited to 25% of my revenue. HB 4153 would correct this problem. Sometimes the Farm Experience is the Product!

The large number of people who commented to the Governor's office an DLCD last year have made it clear what they want. The public wants to interact with farmers and their farms. I ask you to support HB 4153