

Submitter: Kristi Johnson

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

I oppose HB 4153. For 71 years I have lived in Oregon. I am a fourth-generation farmer's daughter and I understand what the original Exclusive Farm Use designation for Oregon land was intended for. I oppose commercialization of farmland.

For more than four decades, Oregon has had a strong policy to protect farmland. The state legislature adopted the policy in 1973 to preserve and maintain land for "farm use," which included raising, harvesting, and selling crops and feeding, breeding, management and sale of livestock. In 1973 only 12 uses were allowed in EFU zones. Today the list has grown to more than 60, which now includes agritourism, boarding and training stables, guest ranches, and destination resorts, all under certain conditions. I feel this growth in allowed activities undermines the original intent of Oregon's farmland protection policy. HB 4153 is designed to eviscerate exclusive farm use zoning and destroy the land use system that makes Oregon special.

HB 4153 is unfair to rural residential landowners. We have a reasonable expectation that adjoining Exclusive Farm Use zoned land will be used for farming, not for retail stores, commercial kitchens, restaurants, concerts, amusement parks, zoos, and entertainment venues. We expect and accept the necessary noise and inconvenience that comes with being part of a farming community. But rural residential landowners – and our farming neighbors – should not be forced to deal with non-farm uses that belong in commercial and manufacturing zones.

I have two personal experiences of commercialization of EFU property, both in Hood River County and in Union County. The Century Farm discussed above in Union County is bordered on two sides by EFU property that is now used for every angle of commercialization possible. I fought Union County Application 20250004 to no avail; Union County planners disregarded the state EFU law of allowing short-term rentals on EFU property.

Since 1979, I have lived on EFU property in Hood River County, bordered by EFU property. In the last 10 years, I have dealt with commercialization of our two neighbors EFU properties for "shooting events," "live concert events," a short-term rental for recreationists, and other events like "birthday event site," and the intrusion is immense. It's nonstop traffic through our property, an access road that was given on a "handshake" for access to a residence, has now become a business highway. This bill is unfair to farmers who use farm stands to market their own crops. Some years ago, for example, one farm stand on Highway 35 in Hood River County put in a soft-serve ice cream machine. Within months, half a dozen other stands lining the road did the same in order to compete. Farmers selling only their crops cannot and should not have to make the investment required to compete with retail stores and entertainment venues.

The state should not force counties to permit non-farm uses that do not fit their particular priorities and types of agriculture. Currently, for example, counties may – but are not required to – allow agritourism and other commercial events on Exclusive Farm Use land. Hood River County has chosen to allow up to 18 days of agritourism events, but not the larger number available in statute, and no commercial events. This is the county's right and choice under current law. It is the balance between tourism and farm land protection that fits Hood River. That local prerogative will be taken away by this bill. HB 4153 would force all counties to allow unlimited commercial activities and entertainment venues under the guise of a "farm store". Please DO NOT do that to Hood River.

KILL HB 4153.