

Submitter: Susan Andrews

On Behalf Of:

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

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4153

Dear legislators,

I am so so tired of all the attempts over the last several years to reallocate the best soils in the country to something other than growing food. It seems as though every year one or more bills are proposed to shift uses of farm land to uses that take that farm land out of production. This bill does not protect that important resource in our state. I understand that giving the public ways to access fresh products at their source is helpful for both farmers and the public, and today there are plenty of provisions that allow for that to happen. There might be some modifications that would be helpful. But we don't need to add expand or add uses which have nothing to do with growing food and allowing residents to buy that food. Weddings. Concerts. Sale of home goods. Huge buildings that consume space better used for agriculture. Conversion into utilities and cell towers and data centers.

Here is a factor that you probably won't hear from other constituents. The counties can't enforce the rules we have. All kinds of stuff is happening which is NOT permitted. Why would you expand the group of activities they need to monitor especially when those activities need to fall into very careful buckets such as how much noise, how many attendees, how much land is used. The better direction for our land use laws should be finding ways to make sure the current rules meet the intention of preserving good soils for farming, are written in a way they are legally enforceable, adding staffing for investigations and citations and legal challenges, beefing up the cost of violations, and getting hearing officers better trained on their local codes and the underlying intentions. Clarity and enforcement mean land owners can plan long term uses for their land, decide if they want to be in that business, remove development pressures, and preserve the option of farming on soils that can't be replaced once they are consumed in something other than food production.

Finally, please recognize that the underlying incentive for those pushing these uses is profit over public good. Your duty as representatives of the public is to sift through what the intention of our laws are, and make sure that your changes meet that intention. More acres of soil in food production helps all of us. Acres consumed with hosting weddings and concerts helps a tiny minority and primarily the single property owner. Don't sell us out.

Thank you for reading this.